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THE

CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE.

THE CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE;

OR,

PICTURES OF THE MUNSTER PEOPLE.

BY

M. W. BREW,

AUTHOR OF "THE BURTONS OF DUNROE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

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1885.

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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
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MAY 25 1918

TO THE

LADY FLORENCE DIXIE,

THE TRUE AND STEADFAST FRIEND OF IRELAND AND HER PEOPLE,

This Irish Novel is Dedicated,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF MUCH RESPECT FOR HER TALENTS,
AND ADMIRATION FOR HER CHARACTER,

BY THE AUTHOR.

437298

PREFACE.

ENCOURAGED by the favourable reception that was given to my first book, "The Burtons of Dunroe," by the Reviewers and the Public, I venture to present myself a second time to their notice, hoping to be received once more with the same indulgence.

It may be said that I have painted the great Irish Famine in colours that are too gloomy, and in language that is too strong. But to this I answer that the story of the Irish Famine could not be told with a pen dipped in rose-water, even in a work of fiction. But there are many still living who remember that calamitous epoch in Irish history, who will bear testimony that I have in no way exaggerated its horrors, or made its details more painful than was warranted by strict truth. They will say that on the contrary, I have passed over them as lightly as it was possible to do, consistently with the proper working out of the story.

There are two different stories running side by side through the book, each having but slight connection with the other. This was to show how universal was the action of the Famine, and how impartial in its effects. Peer and peasant, landlord and tenant, the home of the great, and the cabin of the lowly, all were alike brought under its terrible influence, and all alike were compelled to bend beneath the storm. Some had vitality enough to survive it, and lift their heads once more above the water, but more—and these last were the great majority—went down beneath the waves of utter and hopeless ruin, never to rise again.

With these few words of explanation, which I feel are necessary, and thanking my readers, and the gentlemen of the Press, for their former kindness and indulgence—of which I wish the book were more worthy—I remain their very grateful and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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Here is my gallery of pictures, sirs,
And you are welcome all to enter in;
The more the welcomer. There is room for all
Who care to spend an idle, careless hour,
Scanning the portraits that are gathered here;
For they *are* portraits. Drawn from very life,
In countenance and habit as they lived,
With harsh and awkward pencil, but yet true.
Some of those faces have a happy look,
The impress of the joyous heart within;
And others wear a pensive, mournful gaze,
Born of the "sad pathetic minor" chord
That ran through all the music of their lives.
Come in, good sirs; the doors are opened wide,
And you are very welcome!

THE

CHRONICLES OF CASTLE CLOYNE.

CHAPTER I.

BALLYCROSS FARM.

> Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
> Their homely joys, or destiny obscure.
> GRAY'S "ELEGY."

NOT a model farm by any means was that of Martin MacDermott, who was a "strong farmer," and a tenant on the old estate of Castle Cloyne. The farm of Ballycross had been his father's and his grandfather's, and all of his family, of whom anything was known from time immemorial, had drawn their first breath and breathed out their last sigh under the shelter of the long, low, thatched roof, that stood in unpretentious homeliness within a few hundred yards of the public road. There was some good meadow and arable land on this farm, which consisted of about ninety acres, exclusive of bog—a good deal of which

had been reclaimed from time to time. This reclaimed bog was not fit for much except to grow an inferior sort of potato, which was soapy and watery, and in truth only fit for cattle. There was no scientific farming practised at Ballycross, no experiments tried or novelties introduced, for Martin MacDermott was a staunch Conservative in many things, and in nothing more so than in the cultivation of his land. He farmed it as it had been farmed by his father and grandfather, and what had been good enough for them was, he thought, good enough for himself; they did well in their day, and he could not fail to do well too if he walked in their footsteps. That was his rule of life, to which he strictly adhered, and which, up to the time when this story opens, he had found to answer tolerably well. His farm was as well cultivated as those of his neighbours, and in many ways it could be contrasted with theirs most favourably; it was very productive, and he got the highest price for everything that he brought to fair and market. This being the case, he jogged on in the old beaten track, well content with himself and the world; and he left newfangled ways, as he called them, to younger men, more active in their habits, and more enterprising in their aims. He was not rich, but neither was he poor. He was always ready with his rent on "gale day,"

and was supposed to have something laid by as a provision for that rainy day that comes to most people sooner or later in their lives. But this proverbial rainy day had not come to him yet, nor was there a cloud in the horizon to show that it was coming at all; and, with peace and abundance in his humble home, and a cheerful disposition that looked on all things in their best light, the old age of Martin MacDermott was very happy and serene.

The cottage in which he had lived since his birth was a low thatched house, always well whitewashed, and kept in good substantial repair. The doors and windows were all sound and tight, and such as faced the public road were neatly painted; the thatch was never allowed to get old or shabby-looking, but was often renewed, so that it always looked whole and neat. The house stood on a very slight elevation, and a pathway well beaten down extended from the front door to the road below. A stile of two or three stone steps inserted into the low wall, or rather ditch, that divided the farm from the road, was the mode of entrance to the front of the house, and intended for pedestrians only; but a few yards lower down was a wooden gate, through which the cattle passed to and from the out-offices, that were all situated at the rear.

On the particular day on which my story opens—the last day of October—the farm had rather a bleak and desolate appearance, for the harvest had been all gathered in, and the fields looked bare and brown. But this was amply atoned for by the overflowing abundance of the well-stocked haggard, where the produce of the crops that had looked so green in the previous summer was now gathered together in golden plenty. There were stacks of oats and barley standing round an immense rick of hay, that towered above them all. Nearer to the house was the winter's supply of turf, well built up so as to be completely impervious to the weather, and beside it was a goodly stack of bogwood to be used in giving light to the kitchen through the long, dark winter evenings. There was no lack of substantial comfort in the appearance of Ballycross house or farm, comfort no doubt of a very rude and primitive kind, but still of that kind that it is so pleasant to see. A stranger who passed by, and glanced at the comfortable cottage, with its overflowing haggard at the back, would conclude—and not be far wrong in his conclusion—that it was no misnomer to call the owner of such a homestead a "strong farmer," who was easy in his circumstances, happy in his life, and who owed no man anything.

Martin MacDermott had not married until he was well advanced in years, and his marriage had been blessed with but one child. His wife had died about three years before this time, and since her death, his house had been managed by his daughter, who was as dear to the old man as the apple of his eye. All the love that other fathers diffused among many children was garnered up by him for this one ewe lamb, who in his eyes was the perfection of all that was good and fair in a woman. And to speak the truth, the father's partiality did not go far astray, for Oonagh* was a good affectionate daughter, who did her best to make his old age peaceful and happy, besides being a clever, sensible housekeeper, who managed everything under her care well and wisely. It was his boast that her butter always sold as "first quality," and the cattle she had reared brought the highest prices in the market. The bacon that was cured under her inspection had a flavour that he did not find in any bacon that he ate outside his own house, and the clothes that were spun by her hands were warmer, and lasted longer, than if they had been broadcloth instead of frieze. The girl's health was perfect, and her mind so active, that work with her was not so much a

* *Oonagh*, the Irish for Winifred, pronounced *Una*.

necessity as a pastime. Whatever she had to do she did thoroughly and well; literally fulfilling the Scripture precept, "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." It was this entire thoroughness that had made her dairy a model of the most perfect neatness, and her home not only the abode of plenty, but also the most cheerful and pleasant house in that part of the country.

It was to be more than usually cheerful and pleasant this evening, for it was All-Hallow Eve: which in the south of Ireland is always made a rustic festival. It is spent in eating apples, burning beans, and general merrymaking, and specially devoted by young people to the working of spells and charms, which are believed by them to have the power of revealing the forms, and features, of those who in the distant and shadowy future are fated to become their future spouses.

The farmer had gone to a fair early in the morning, and before he left Oonagh had made him promise that when he returned in the evening he would bring with him Jack Hennessy, the blind piper, if the said Jack was "over ground," as she had set her heart on having a dance, in addition to the other amusements peculiar to All-Hallow Eve. The men and boys employed on the farm had also gone to the fair, and no one remained in the house but Oonagh and two other

females. One of these was an elderly woman who helped in doing the house-work, though she was not considered exactly in the light of a servant. Oonagh would have laughed heartily at the idea of having a servant, or being thought entitled to have one either, for she did not pretend to be anything but just what she was, an honest man's daughter, and a decent country girl. The third person was a cousin of Oonagh's, who had come to spend the festival with her. The trio had had an early dinner, after which they fed the pigs, the calves, and the poultry; then they scalded the milk-pans, milked the cows; and lastly, they made the kitchen neat and tidy for the reception of the guests who had been invited to spend the evening. Many hands make light work, particularly when the hands are impelled by willing hearts, and before evening had set in their business was all done, and the two girls retired to the little room they occupied in common to wash the dust from their faces and hands, and exchange their working clothes for those which were kept exclusively for Sundays and holidays. No fine ladies arraying themselves for a Court ball ever felt more pleasure in doing so than these artless country girls felt in donning their simple finery, and helping each other to display it to the best advantage. Their dresses in truth were not very

expensive, or elaborate, and were unaccompanied by any ornaments save those of youth, good looks, and the modesty that is second nature to an Irish maiden. When their simple toilet had been completed to their satisfaction, they returned to the kitchen to exhibit themselves to old Molly, and get her opinion as to its success.

"Now, Molly, tell the truth. Which ov us do you like the best?" said Oonagh, with a pleasant smile.

"Why, thin, that I may never die in sin if I could make a choice betune ye!" replied Molly, looking from one to the other with unfeigned admiration. "Oonagh has the natest gound, but Shusy's ribbon bates out all the ribbons ever I seen. It's raley purty, so it is, an' shuits her colour just as if she bespoke the makin' ov it."

"And look at the lovely comb I have in my back hair," cried Susie. "Isn't it very purty intirely?"

"Faix an' it is so. No wan could fault that comb that had an eye in his head. Who gave it to you, Shusy?"

"My brother Tom gave it to me as a Christmas-box. I never wear it but ov an odd time, for 'tis too good for common use."

"Your brother Tom is a rale good boy. I wish, Shusy, that yourself and myself could make a match

betune him an' Oonagh. What a purty couple they'd make, an' what a roarin' weddin' we'd have over 'em!"

Oonagh tossed her pretty head, and told the old woman that she preferred her old father to the best husband in the world, and Susie laughed and said that of all the girls she knew, Oonagh was the one she would select as a wife for her brother.

"But, girls, how will it be if Jack Hennessy isn't able to come?" said Molly, with a grave face.

This question put a stop to the merriment of the girls, for the non-arrival of the blind piper would be a most disastrous ending to all their preparations.

"What put that into your head, Molly?" they both cried with one voice.

"Well, for wan thing, this is Novimber Eve, an' powers ov people will be at the fair watchin' to snap him up. An' moreover, if he was there, many a wan was for giving him a thrate, and we all know that Jack loves the licker, and that when it gets into his head it takes all sinse an' raison out ov it. I'll go bail if Jack comes to us anyway overtaken, 'tis little dancin' will be on this flure to-night."

"My father promised me that he'd look out for Jack the first thing afther he got into the fair green," said Oonagh, "an' what's more, that he'd give him in charge ov Paddy Bryan, wid strict ordhers not to

let him have a taste ov licker for the whole day, barrin' wan noggin ov sperrits to keep the cowld out ov his stomach. An' when once my father makes me a promise, it will go hard wid him if he don't keep it."

"It is a'most time they wor here now," observed Susie, "an' Judy likewise. We may as well go down to the stile, an' watch for them comin'; sure 'tis as good for us as to be standin' here."

"Now, Molly, I depind on you to have a good fire whin they come in," said Oonagh; "they'll be fairly famished, an' the sight ov a good fire will be a rale welcome to them after bein' out all day. An' Molly asthore, don't forget to have the potatoes on the fire, for they'll be hungry as well as cold."

"Niver fear, you can depind on me the same as if it was yourself was in it," answered Molly.

The two girls strolled down the path in front of the house, and when they came to the stile at the end stood there, watching the people who were returning from the fair, and exchanging greetings with such of them as they had any acquaintance with. Though the short October day was rapidly drawing to a close there was yet sufficient light to enable them to see and to be seen, and a very pretty picture they made as they stood side by side, leaning on the stile. They

were both very pretty girls; young, fresh, and bright with health, and good spirits. At first sight Susie would be considered the handsomer of the two. She was tall and slender, with bright amber-coloured hair, and a fair soft face, the chief charm of which was a pensive innocent expression, that won upon all who saw it. She had a gentle caressing manner, especially towards anyone she loved, and a heart too tender and yielding for the stern discipline that in nine cases out of ten is sure to be a woman's lot.

The beauty of Oonagh was not inferior to that of her cousin, though it was altogether of a different character. She was not so tall, being just the medium height, nor so slender, but her figure was perfectly moulded, and her carriage upright and graceful. Her face was not quite so handsome as Susie's, but it had a thousand times more character. The lips, though sweet and flexible, expressed much firmness and determination, and there was high spirit and no small share of pride in the finely-curved nostril and square jaw, too square indeed to harmonise with the strict rules of beauty. But the great attraction of the girl's face lay in her eyes—the regular Irish eyes—gray, soft, earnest, and shaded by long lashes so dark as to be almost black. When she spoke she looked full in the face of whoever she addressed with those won-

derful eyes, as if she had nothing to fear, and nothing to conceal. There was an expression of ineffable candour and sweetness in those clear calm eyes, as if the soul that looked out through them was truth and peace—true to itself, and at peace with all the world. Her hair, like her eyelashes and brows, was very dark. The general expression of Oonagh's face was one of mingled gravity and resolution, which would have been rather disagreeable but that it was tempered, and toned down by the exceeding sweetness of the soft, gray eyes.

"Isn't Judy very late?" remarked Susie.

"She has a dale to do, an' no wan to help her or do a hand's turn for her; her stepmother keeps her hard at work, an' 'tis seldom she can get out at all," replied Oonagh.

"It would be quare if she couldn't come. We'd have no fun at all without Judy. She's so pleasant that the very look ov her brightens up a place when she comes into it. An' sure if she don't come, how are we to manage to do the trick of the dumb cake?"

"We'd be a dale sorrier that she lost the diversh un an' the pleasant night," said unselfish Oonagh, "than if we was never to do the charm ov the dumb cake at all. An' sure if all fails us, we can make Molly do it along wid us."

"Oh! by your lave, that wouldn't do at all. The three women that does the charm must be unmarried, an' poor ould Molly is a widder woman this many a year."

"I never thought ov that. But if Judy don't come, we can ask somewan ov the other girls to stop wid us for the night. But I won't enjoy myself at all if poor Judy isn't wid us, for she has a hard life with her cross stepmother, an' a little fun don't often fall in her way."

"Oh, here she is!" exclaimed Susie joyfully. "I see her red shawl a good way off. Now, Oonagh, we're all right if only Jack Hennessy don't fail us."

The two girls ran out on the road to meet the new comer with many demonstrations of joy. She was about their own age, a handsome, sparkling-looking brunette, with a bright complexion, and black eyes that actually flashed with joy and excitement.

"An' I didn't forget the chicken's egg for the dumb cake," she cried, as soon as the first transports of the meeting had somewhat subsided. "I was in dhread that Oonagh had no chicken ready to lay, so not to have any disappointment I brought the egg wid me."

"Oh! we have the egg safe enough," said Oonagh, "an' I have the same egg undher lock an' kay for

the last week, in dhread that anything would happen it. But run into the fire, Judy, *a' rágal,* for you must be froze wid the cold, an' we'll folly afther you as soon as ever my father comes. He ought to be here by this."

"If you only said the words sooner so he would. But oh, girls! Jack Hennessy isn't along wid him."

At this dismal announcement all the gladness faded out of the faces of the three fair girls. Jack Hennessy was not coming, and consequently there could be no dance! Here was a *fiasco* as unfortunate as it was unexpected, and all their anticipations of a pleasant evening were in one moment dashed rudely to the ground. It was hard on them after having invited all their friends and neighbours to come and make merry. The non-arrival of Jack Hennessy had knocked all their innocent plans about their ears like a house of cards!

CHAPTER II.

ALL-HALLOW EVE.

O youth! thou hast a wealth beyond
What careful men do spend their souls to gain.
MARY HOWITT.

"WHERE is Jack Hennessy? Why didn't you bring him wid you? Sure we won't have any fun in life without the music," were the exclamations of the three girls as old Martin MacDermott approached the stile.

"I didn't bring him, an' there's no more about it," he replied gruffly. "Come along, Oonagh, an' get the supper, for I'm fairly starved. It's my supper that's troubling me now, an' not Jack Hennessy an' his music."

"But did you get sight ov him at all, or did you send to look for him as you promised me? Oh, thin we never thought that you'd lave us in the bog hole this way!"

"Sure I sint Paddy Bryan to hunt for him, an' I wint myself afther Paddy, but where was the use? He was whipped up this mornin', an' carried off to a weddin' that's to be to-night, a great weddin' intirely beyant at Ballycasey, an' ov coorse they couldn't do without Jack an' his chanther, be no manner ov manes."

"Erra, girls, don't mind him," cried Oonagh joyfully, for though her father tried hard to keep a grave face, yet the merry twinkle of his eye betrayed him; "sure he's only makin' fun ov us. I'll go bail that Jack Hennessy is comin' on along wid Paddy."

The old man burst into a hearty laugh.

"Wisha bad manners to you for an old schamer," cried Susie, drawing a long breath of intense relief, "what a fine rise you took out ov us!"

"If you were as well used to his schamin' as what I am, it wouldn't be such a surprise to you," said Oonagh gaily.

"Well, as Oonagh guessed it, I may as well tell the thruth about it. The piper is surely comin' along wid Paddy, who had strict ordhers from me not to lose sight ov him. But, Oonagh, *'a colleen dhass,* be alive about the supper, for I'm as hungry as if I didn't see a male of vittles for a week."

As soon as Molly had heard the farmer's voice

talking to the girls she lost no time in getting the supper ready, so that it was on the table when they entered the house. It would be hard to find a happier set of people than they who sat down to the large dish of hot potatoes, flanked by piggins of milk, and plates of butter. It was not often that there were strangers at Ballycross, and Oonagh would have liked to have added a rasher of bacon to this ordinary fare in their honour, but that was not possible as it was a strict fast-day.

Supper was hardly over when Paddy the farm servant, with a broad grin on his weather-beaten face, arrived in triumph, bringing the piper with him. The three girls broke into a perfect shriek of delight when they saw the pair, and certainly Jack had no reason to complain of his welcome. One of them took his hat, another his stick, while the third took him by the hand, and guided him to the cosiest corner of the wide hearth near old Martin, who said to them, "It's his supper ye ought to be givin' the poor man, instid of makin' all this noise an' botheration."

"So we will, father, so we will," said the cheerful voice of his daughter, "but he must get the cowld out of his heart first. I put some potatoes down to roast for him, for they were gettin' cowld, an' they'll

be nice an' hot by the time he takes a hate ov the fire."

When Jack had eaten his supper, Oonagh by her father's directions brought him a glass of whiskey to "wet his whistle," and put him in good humour for the evening. Then when he had joined the old man in "a blast ov the pipe" he set about tuning his instrument, and though the sounds he drew from it were discordant enough, to the light-hearted girls they seemed the music of the spheres.

Not less pleasant was the droning of the pipes in the ears of the invited guests, as they came singly or in groups up the path that led to the house. There were pretty modest-looking girls who came with their lovers and brothers, dressed in their best finery, and ready for any amount of innocent amusement that might be set on foot. A few elderly people came to see their children enjoying themselves, as well as to have a *shanahus* with old Martin. There was John Molloy, the rustic beau and dandy of the district, who was called by the men "Buck Molloy" in derision, because he was always clad in "broadcloth" instead of frieze which they themselves wore, and because he used long words in speaking, and had a conceited swaggering way with him that they thought supremely ridiculous. By the women he was called by the

more complimentary sobriquet of "Shawn Sugagh," or "Pleasant John," because for them he had always a bright smile, a cheerful word, and a manner so flattering, and persuasive, that they thought him perfectly irresistible. But the popularity of "Pleasant John" did not extend from the young girls to their fathers, who all thought him a good-for-nothing fellow, whose only property consisted of his fine clothes, and whose "pleasant" manner was nothing more than swagger and impudence.

This rustic Adonis was living with an elder brother, who lived on a good farm—well tilled and stocked—and who, being a bachelor, did not grudge him a seat at his table, and the shelter of his roof. Sometimes John did a day's work on the farm, but this was only at a very busy time such as springtime and harvest; but for the greater part of his life he was perfectly idle, though his brother had to work very hard to keep the wolf from the door.

Whenever John was reproached for his idleness, he invariably replied that hard work did not agree with him; or, in plain language, he did not care to work, and disliked it intensely. A small share of work went very far indeed with "Pleasant John." But though he was never known to work more than a couple of days in the week, and only then under

the spur of most pressing necessity, he was indefatigable in his attendance at fair and market, though he had nothing to buy or sell; as his brother, for many good reasons, never entrusted him with the transaction of his business. John was also most punctual in giving the light of his countenance to weddings and wakes, and such other social gatherings as gave him a chance of meeting his acquaintances, and of showing off his handsome face and "pleasant" ways among the young women of the district.

Though the feminine portion of the community looked on him with much favour, all his own sex, particularly the seniors, set him down, and with truth, as a professional fortune-hunter. His brother, they said, would be sure to marry, for he was still a young man; and, in that case, John's tenure in the house would rest on a very sandy foundation; for it was not likely that the new mistress would have much toleration for such an idle and unprofitable inmate.

Having a shrewd suspicion himself of this awkward eventuality, John turned his thoughts to making a rich marriage, as it seemed the only way by which he could settle himself comfortably in life. And it was remarked of him that though he flirted furiously with every pretty girl he met, yet that he never devoted himself for more than the time being,

to anyone who was not well endowed with worldly goods.

It is a strange thing, but no less true, that Oonagh MacDermott, who was a sensible young woman, was so foolish as not only to receive favourably the admiration of this idle, worthless fellow, but had learned to love him with a love that a true woman feels but once in all her life. She was infatuated by his handsome face, and plausible tongue, and made a vow to her own heart that if she were not married to him she would never marry any other man.

But she had a silent disposition, and buried this love in the depths of her own heart, and not even to her friends Susie, and Judy, did she give the least hint that this man was more to her than all the rest of the world. When he should ask her to be his wife, she would admit how long and well she had loved him, but never until then.

I have said so much of "Shawn Sugagh"—partly because he is one of the chief personages of my story, and exercised an overpowering influence on the life and fortunes of Oonagh, and partly because he assumes to himself the first place wherever he is as his own special right—that I have not left much space for the description of the other guests. But it is not necessary, as they were all of the common

type of country men and women, who all came to enjoy themselves, and contribute to the enjoyment of the rest.

They were all accustomed to make merry on All-Hallow Eve—literally the Eve of All Saints—and they were fully determined to do so on the present occasion. On that night every family, no matter how poor, has an attempt at merrymaking, even in a small way, and tries, for a few hours at least, to put grief and care into the background.

The young people ate apples and burned beans, as well as going through all manner of weird spells and charms.

On All-Hallow Eve, the fairies, or the "good people" as they were popularly called, were supposed to be particularly active, and to be endowed with a power that was not given them at any other time of the year. On that one night they meddle more with the affairs of men—a race that they envied because they had been endowed with souls, and destined for the eternal happiness of heaven that was denied to themselves. These tiny people were supposed to preside over all the spells of this night, hop over the girdle on which the young girls burned themselves with their sweethearts in the form of beans, perch on the edge of the tea-cup which some experienced

sybil was "tossing" for the benefit of the young people, who with eager faces, and earnest eyes were grouped all round her, waiting for the words that were to them as the oracles of Fate; and directed with unerring accuracy the size and shape that the molten lead was to assume when thrown into cold water. In short, on this night the fairies reign supreme all over the south of Ireland, ready to lend their aid when properly invoked by the usual mystic words, and ceremonies, to all who seek "to pierce the unborn years." Like Queen Mab, they haunted dreams, and filled the night with fantastic visions of the future, that were not to be expected on any other night of the year. That was so some fifty years ago; but in these degenerate days it would seem that the wee people who were so sportive, and playful, have been frightened away by the shriek of the railway engine, and the advance of that ubiquitous personage "the schoolmaster abroad," and the haunts where they played their elfish tricks, will know them no more.

When the apples had been all eaten, and the beans all burnt, amid the good-humoured laughter of the company, the floor of the kitchen was cleared of chairs and tables, Jack Hennessy struck up the cheerful strains of "The Fox-hunters' Jig," and old Martin, in a pleasant voice, told the young men to lose no

time in asking their partners, "to take the flure wid 'em." But not one of those sheepish fellows felt inclined to be the first, "to take the flure"; they all hung back shamefaced, and bashful, each waiting for someone else to begin. It was on an occasion such as this, that John Molloy showed himself to great advantage. Now with the native confidence that never deserted him, he gallantly sprung up, and advancing to where Oonagh sat, put both his heels together, and making her a low bow, asked her with a smile, that disclosed a set of teeth as white, and even as those of a hound, "if she would be plased to take the flure wid him."

In answer to this invitation Oonagh stood up, and, with a deep curtsey in return for his bow, gave him her hand. Emboldened by the Buck's example, other young men took heart of grace, and came forward to secure partners. That indeed was dancing! The boys went at it as if they meant business, and would not admit of any shams. It was amusing to see how conscientiously they did all their "steps" both in jigs and reels; the pigeon's wing, cover the buckle, the double shuffle, heel and toe, and then *da capo*. They were in earnest—those stalwart young country fellows, and no mistake. They snapped their fingers, stamped on the floor, and withal kept the most perfect time

to the music. The dancing of the girls was of quite a different description. They had as many "steps" as the men, but they executed them more neatly, and with less flourish. Their movements were light, easy and exceedingly graceful. The clumsiest and most awkward-looking among them became quite another person when she stood up to dance. Her motions became buoyant and graceful, her feet light and elastic. And if sparkling eyes, pleasant smiles, and blushes that came and went in quick succession, were true indications of their feelings, they enjoyed the music and the dancing quite as much as their partners, although they were not altogether as demonstrative.

At the end of a couple of hours the piper declared that he should have a little rest, as well as a glass of punch to "wet his whistle" once more, and then began the fun of the snap-apple. An enormous apple was suspended by a string from the roof, and some lighted candles were stuck into it all round. The fun consisted in the young men trying in turn to take a bite out of the apple, a difficult task—as they were not allowed to use their hands to steady it as it swung to and fro, and not a little dangerous, as they ran the risk of burning their noses or of singeing their whiskers. At each ineffectual attempt to take a bite, there were peals of laughter from all the rest, and the apple kept dangling

and the candles burning, as if in mockery of the desperate efforts made to pull them down. At last the string took fire, and the apple fell to the ground, not, however, until it had served the purpose for which it had been hung up, and being the cause of provoking much mirth and sly badinage.

While the young people were amusing themselves after their own fashion, the seniors of the party sat at the ample hearth blazing with turf and bogwood. The men smoked their pipes with old Martin at one side, discussing the price of butter and corn, and other topics equally interesting to them, while at the other side of the fire the women watched the dancing with the critical eyes of persons who had been good dancers in their own day, and consequently thought themselves entitled to give their opinions on the subject. They chatted, and laughed, and enjoyed the passing hour—those poor toil-worn old people—as if labour and poverty were not the chief elements of their daily life, and as if the dreaded "gale day" were not looming darkly, but surely, in the distance.

About eleven o'clock the large kitchen table was drawn again to its old place in the centre, and soon by the deft hands of Oonagh and Molly, it was covered with huge piles of bread and butter, every slice being fully an inch thick, and an immense tea-pot surrounded

by a formidable array of cups and saucers. Their exertions during the evening had given the company the appetite of a London alderman, and they attacked the good cheer with a vigour that soon disposed of it very satisfactorily. Then by way of variety, at the close of the entertainment, some songs were sung, and more apples were handed round so that the company could eat while they were listening. But at length the last song was sung, the last apple eaten, the last pipe smoked, and the guests all went away with the exception of the piper, who was to sleep with Paddy Bryan in the loft over the kitchen. The old farmer, now completely tired out, retired to his own little bedroom, and the three girls were left free to enter on the solemn, and weird mystery of the "Dumb Cake."

CHAPTER III.

THE DUMB CAKE.

> With hearts that tremble between hopes and fears,
> We seek to pierce the gloom of future years,
> And, with irreverent, and daring hand,
> Uplift the veil that shrouds th' unseen land.

Making, baking, and eating the "dumb cake" is a form of spell known only in Ireland, by which those who practised it sought to obtain some glimpses of the destiny that awaited them in after-life. The spell should only be wrought on All-Hallow Eve, as being the night of all the year when the "good people" had most influence on the fate of human beings, and by three women, who should all be unmarried, and on whose maiden fame no evil shadow had ever rested. Neither a wife, nor a widow, could take any part in the mysterious rites, for their lot was fixed, their fortunes had been told long before, and they

had nothing more to learn by diving into the future but what they were already well aware of, namely, that they were mortal, and must one day die.

When all in the house but themselves were asleep, the three girls proceeded to make the dumb cake. The ingredients of this magic cake consisted of an egg, which should be the first laid by a chicken, the shell of this full of flour, and another egg-shell full of salt. Those three were to be mixed by the three girls, baked by the three, and eaten by the three, in the most perfect silence. From the moment when the three put each a hand to work the cake until they awoke next morning, they were bound to observe the most rigid silence; for the utterance of even one word would have the effect of breaking the spell, and rendering its power null and void.

It was this strict and necessary silence which gave it the name of "dumb cake." So while the three girls were making, baking, and eating it, taking great care that not even a crumb was left behind, they never spoke a word, and in the same silence they retired to rest. It was also *de rigueur* that the three girls should sleep under the same roof, so that they should see the book of the future unfolded within reach of each other.

Early next morning the people at the farm were

all astir. The farmer and his man Paddy went off to early mass; for the Feast of All Saints is a strict holy-day in the Catholic Church. Molly and the three girls were to go to a late mass; but in the meantime they were by no means idle, for the cows had to be milked, the dairy to be attended to, and the pigs and poultry fed. They were so busy that they had no time to think of their dreams of the previous night, or tell each other of the great and wonderful revelations that had been given to them while they abode in the solemn, and mysterious land of sleep.

When the morning's work was done and breakfast despatched, the farmer and his man went off to a distant part of the land to look after a sick cow, and only the women remained in the house.

Though old Molly had left her girlhood far behind her, she had her full share of the faith in the spell of the dumb cake, and a good deal of womanly sympathy with those who, by virtue of their youth and maidenhood, were privileged to perform it. She was curious, too, to know what each and all had to tell her of the working of the charm, which no doubt she had herself often tried in the long-past days of her youth.

"'Tis too soon to go to mass yet," she said to

them; "moreover, we have the place all to oursels; so sit down, girls, by the fire, and let us hear what luck the dumb cake brought to ye. 'Tis something good, or I'm greatly disappointed; for ye all desarve good luck, and ye'll get it too, never fear. Come, Oonagh *machree*, let you begin, as you're the eldher; though, for that matther, there's no great differ betune any ov ye."

"Oh, let Judy begin first, as she's the stranger. Sure, 'tis only manners to let her tell her story first."

Judy began clearing her throat, and looked as bashful as possible, while all the others began to laugh.

"Come now, Judy, make a clane breast of it," said Molly, entering with good-natured interest into the spirit of the fun, "an' tell us what sort ov a boy it was that you dhramed ov last night."

"Oh, wisha, I might as well tell it at wanst, for ye never could guess it if ye wor to be guessin' for a week," with a burst of loud laughter, and a saucy toss of her head. "The boy that came to me was a boy that I never would marry, if he had the estate of Castle Cloyne at his back. It was that mad Dick Considine that came to me in my dhrames; no less, if ye plase!"

"Dick Considine isn't mad at all, whatever people

may say," said Oonagh; "though I own he's a little quare in himself at times. He's a dacent, honest boy, that minds his bisness; an', signs on, he has bisness to do when other men are wid their hands in their pockets. Sorra bit ov madness is in the same boy, but what's in the looks av him; and, sure, looks don't signify a thrawneen. I heard my father say that Dick has a nice spot ov ground up in the mountains, an' that he has it well for the value too. So you needn't turn up your nose at him, Judy."

"Well, as ye think so much ov him, you're welcome to my share ov him. I'll never marry a madman, for maybe 'tis to kill me he would."

"But, Judy, it wasn't to me he came last night, but to yourself."

"Well, then, he made a great mistake intirely in comin' to me; I wouldn't marry that cracked fellow—no, not if he was the Queen's eldest son. I tell ye all that, now, an' ye can remimber my words."

There was another burst of mocking laughter from the other two girls, at which Judy's bright colour became still more bright, and her black eyes flashed indignantly.

"Who did you dhrame ov, Shusy?" said Molly, trying to pour oil on the troubled waters by changing the subject.

"Oh, then, botheration to it for a story!" replied Susie, with a pretty pout. "I had no better luck than Judy, for if she dhramed ov a madman, I dhramed ov a fool—the biggest fool in the whole counthry."

"An' who was he, *eroo?* Was it Mike *na Lhibe*, for he's the biggest fool in the counthry?"

"It wasn't Mike *na Lhibe*."

"An' who was it, then?"

"It was Shawn Sugagh!"

"An' do you call him a fool, Shusy? He's the very handsomest boy in the three baronies, let alone the pleasantest; an' 'tis because he is so pleasant and good-humoured, that the name of "Shawn Sugagh" was put on him. Hould your whisht, little girl, an' let no one see that you're so foolish. John Molloy is husband good enough for the first lady in the land."

"Then the first lady in the land may have the *omadhawn*, for all I care," said pretty Susie. "It never'll be said ov me, that wid my eyes open I went to marry the likes ov him."

"What is there so foolish about him?" asked Oonagh.

"Well, Oonagh, one would think, to hear you ask that question, that you hadn't an eye in your

head. Why, he's full of consate an' impudence up to his very chin. Only look at the swagger ov him, and listen to his tall English, all the same as if he was an estated gentleman, an' the aiqual ov Masther Hy'cinth Dillon, ov Castle Cloyne, an' instid ov that he hasn't a majesty to bless himself wid, either goold, silver, or brass, but as his hard-workin' brother will give it to him. The poor ape thinks that all the girls are dyin' about him, an' all the time they're only makin' game ov him."

"You're as hard to be pleased as Judy, every bit," said the old woman, "but 'tis no use for either ov ye to be grumblin'. What's allotted can't be blotted. Them two boys is marked out for the pair ov ye, an' mark my words, if it was in twenty years to come ye'll be married to them, an' to no one else. So ye may as well make the best of it, an' be satisfied wid what's ordained for ye. If ye're so hard to be pleased, 'tis the crooked stick ye might get instid of a husband. Did ye ever hear tell the story of the crooked stick?"

"Och! don't be botherin' about it. I'm rale sorry I had any hand in that dumb cake at all. It's nothing at all but an ould *pisherogue*."*

* *Pisherogue*—Superstition.

At this sally they all laughed again.

"I'll tell you this day that you'll marry John Molloy the fool, the same day that I marry mad Dick Considine," cries the incorrigible Judy, hardly able to speak for laughter.

"Folly on, childher, folly on; sure ye'll never be younger, or heartier, than what ye are to-day, an' the world is all on before ye," said Molly. "It's time enough for ye to be sorrowful when the sorra comes in the dure to ye. Now, Oonagh *Anien dheelish*,* 'tis your turn. Tell us who was the bachelor that came to you last night. I hope you won't be as hard to be pleased as these foolish girls here."

"No bachelor came to me," replied Oonagh quietly.

"Eyeh! No bachelor came to you after putting a hand in the dumb cake?"

"Sorro wan at all."

"Well, what did you dhrame ov thin? Something sthrong, I'll go bail, you're so long in tellin' us."

"It was worse than sthrong, Molly, it was frightful—part ov it, I mane. I dhreamt that I was in chapel hearing mass, an' though the chapel was full ov people I didn't mind any wan there but the priest

* *Anien dheelish*—Dearest daughter.

that was on the altar. He was a handsome young man, wid fair hair an' blue eyes, an' I thought I heard some one near me say that he was the new coajuther an' that that was his first mass in the parish."

"Sure that was no bachelor at all," cried laughing Judy, "no wan could marry a priest."

"Well, sure she couldn't be married without a priest, could she?" said the old woman. "Go on, and tell us about the husband, *a rágal*! You dhreamt ov something else, surely?"

"I did," replied the girl with an expression of much gravity in her soft gray eyes. "I thought that I was in bed, not here at home but in a strange place I never was in before, an' as I was lyin' there awake I thought two men carryin' a coffin betune 'em came in, an' laid the coffin down by the side ov my bed an' thin went away. When they were gone I ris up on my elbow, an' looked on the plate that was on the cover, an' there was 'Oonagh MacDermott,' my own name, on it! When I saw that, I was so frightened that I awoke, an' my hand to you I had no more sleep after that."

"The Lord save us! That was a frightful dhrame to have," cried the timid Susie with a shudder.

"Eyeh, that I mightn't die in sin, if I believe in dhrames at all!" exclaimed the good-natured Molly trying to cheer them after having heard such a weird revelation.

"They're only ould talk, an' the dumb cake is only fit for makin' fun ov it. Many a time I done it when I was a colleen oge, full ov fun an' divarshun, an' the man I took wid in the ind wasn't any ov them I dhramed ov at all, though he was a good husband to me while the Lord left us together. Och! sure if I thought things would turn out so conthrary intirely, I'd set my face against the whole box and dice from the bignin."

"Well, there's no help for spilled milk but to call the cat," observed Oonagh philosophically. "We may as well not be botherin' ourselves about charms and thricks on All-Hallow Eve, for they're nothing but a pack ov lies. The clergy is complately agin the like, an' as we wint agin the clergy, we couldn't expect to have better luck. For my own part, I'll larn a lesson by it, an' that's never to make or meddle wid *pishe-rogues* agin durin' duration."

"Wan would think Oonagh has made up her mind to be an old maid," said Judy, "but don't ye mind that at all. That's an intention she won't keep when the

right boy comes to the fore," and the joyous-hearted girl sang the chorus of an old song,

"Ballinnamona oro !
The snug little wedding for me."

"Here are my father an' Paddy comin' across the stile," said Oonagh, starting up from her seat, "an' tis time for us to be on the road, barrin' we want to be late for mass."

"Oonagh is in a hurry to see if the priest that says last mass is like the priest that was in her dhrame," said Susie

"Faith, thin, I'm not so. I know well 'tis ould Father Rafferty that will be on the altar, an' won't he make a fine complaint ov me to Miss Grace, if I'm late for mass."

When they were at dinner in the afternoon the farmer made severul sly allusions to the spells usually done by young people on All-Hallow Eve, and ended by asking the blushing girls what bachelors did they dream of. There was a good deal of fencing on the part of the trio, and at last they boldly denied having done any charms, or dreamed of any one, or any thing in particular. At this, Martin laughed long and loud, and continued bantering and teasing them, until at last Molly came to the rescue, by asking what an old man like him knew of such things.

"Now, Molly, you may as well let the cat out ov the bag. Sure I know well that my back wasn't well turned this mornin', when you heard it all from 'em."

"Well, an' if I did itself, you may as well take it aisy, honest man, for I don't mane to make you as wise as myself. Erra! what can an ould man like you know what young girls do be thinking ov? You know tales is'nt to be told out of school."

"Well, girls, ye have no call to be so shamefaced about it," said the kind old man. "Tis only what ye're mothers an' grandmothers done before ye wor born, and what ye'r own girls will be doin' in their turn. The day will come when ye won't think ov the like at all, so while ever ye'r young, and hearty, have the bit ov divarshun, an' give no thanks to any wan o' count ov it."

When dinner was over the two visitors prepared to go away. Judy went first, having the fear of her cross stepmother before her eyes, but Susie stayed longer, waiting for her brother who was to come for her. With the shades of evening he came on horseback, with a pillion behind him for Susie. He was a good-looking young man, with a frank honest expression of countenance, that also seemed very shrewd and sensible. He was very much attached to Susie, who fully returned

his affection, and thought how very happy she would be if she could succeed in "making a match" between this dear brother and her cousin Oonagh. Her efforts in this direction, however, had up to this not been been attended with any success. Oonagh was, as Susie expressed it, "hard to plase," or in other words she did not see Tom Burke's perfections in the same rose-coloured light that his sister saw them, and gave a deaf ear to all the hints that Susie was constantly throwing out on the subject.

Tom Burke was obliged to dismount, for the hospitable farmer would not consent to his riding off until he had taken some refreshment, and his horse had got a feed of oats. While Tom was eating, Martin kept the two girls in an agony of bashfulness and terror, by threatening to tell him who they had dreamed of on the preceding night—an idle threat on his part, considering that he did not know it himself, though he teased them by pretending that Molly had told him privately. At last Tom, remembering that he had fifteen miles to ride before they could reach home, hurried Susie out of the house, and in a few moments the clatter of his horse's hoofs died away in the distance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "TIMBERS OF A PRIEST."

Ah me! how weak a thing
The heart of woman is!

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER their unusual dissipation on All-Hallow Eve, the family at Ballycross fell again, as a matter of course, into the groove of their old quiet monotonous life. Very quiet indeed that life was, having nothing to mark the passage of time but the round of weekly labour, broken only by the rest of the Sunday, and the duty of hearing mass on that sacred day. The farm of Martin MacDermott was some miles distant from any town or even village, so that the life passed by him and his family was one of almost unbroken solitude and seclusion from the world. They did not consider this isolation any hardship, or feel discontented or lonely because of it, for they had always

been accustomed to it, and had never the experience of any other life. To be ready with the rent on gale day, as well as when the tax collector was expected on his round, and to support themselves after all was paid in tolerable comfort, required so much incessant labour, and careful thrift, that they had neither time nor inclination to think of much variety, or amusements. In attending to their business early and late, they found an occupation full of the most absorbing interest, and in ministering to the wants of all the dumb creatures that were on the farm, and in one way or another, contributed to make money, and keep the wheel going round, they found quite as much variety and pleasure as they cared to have. There was no *ennui* ever felt among them, for every hour of the day was fully occupied by its own allotted task, and every season brought the work that of right belonged to itself. The bread that was earned by this continuous labour had a savour that made it very pleasant, and the sleep that followed after a long day of restless activity, was sound and refreshing. If their ideas were few, and all turned in one narrow groove, their consciences were at peace with themselves, and the world; and if their lives were without excitement or strong emotion they were, on the other hand, very peaceful and happy.

Very often did Oonagh think of the strange dream she had had on All-Hallow Eve; a dream so unlike anything that she had imagined it would have been. She was quite sure that the lover who would appear to her under the magic spell of the dumb cake would be John Molloy, and yet it was not to her he had come but to Susie Burke, who not only did not care for him, but had called him a fool, and thought herself aggrieved by being put off with such a husband. Still though she could not prevent her thoughts from dwelling on it, she did not put much faith in the prediction that on her coffin would be inscribed "Oonagh MacDermott," though what the young priest celebrating his first mass in her presence had to do with her future life, she could not imagine. She had joined the two girls as light-hearted, and joyous as she was herself, in the charm of the dumb cake, partly for the fun of the thing, and partly because it was the correct thing for three unmarried girls to do on All-Hallow Eve. She was the one of the three the most unlikely to die unmarried, for she had many lovers, and none of them at all backward in trying to win her favour. As her father's only child she was an heiress in a small way, and a good farm with a long lease, well tilled and stocked, with a comfortably furnished house on it, constituted a dowry

that heightened her attractions in the eyes of her rustic admirers very considerably. The Irish peasant has an insatiable "earth hunger," and a woman who is the fortunate owner of a "little spot of land," is sure to be sought after, no matter what her appearance or disposition may be. But Oonagh's attractions were not altogether confined to the "spot of land," for though not what is called beautiful, she was a very pretty girl, and when youth and good looks were thrown into the scale, along with the house and farm, there was not much probability that she would die unmarried, "that malady most incident to maids."

However, it must be confessed that Oonagh had not shown her usual good common sense when she had, out of all her admirers, selected as the one man to whom only she would give herself away, the idle, good-for-nothing fellow that Susie had so contemptuously called "that fool, John Molloy!" John, with his "pleasant" ways and handsome face, had fairly bewitched the innocent, simple-minded country girl. His big words, that made up in sound what they wanted in sense, seemed to her the essence of fine education, and his impudent swagger the perfection of ease and good breeding.

He had deluded Oonagh as he had deluded many another girl, to all of whom he had devoted himself

until they had dismissed him, or until he had discovered that their portions did not come up to his expectations. With all his "pleasantness" he never lost sight of the main chance, but was fully determined to sell himself in the matrimonial market for the very highest price that he could obtain.

Neither youth, nor beauty, nor goodness, possessed any value inhis eyes, compared withhouse, and land, and money. If he ever thought of them at all, it was as very secondary considerations indeed. They were all very good things, he admitted, when cast into the scale with world's wealth, but when in the opposite one, were not to be thought of at all. With him the great point was not the wife, but the fortune; and he was indifferent whether the fortune was to consist of land or money. However, of the two he preferred the land, as being—provided the lease was a good one, and the rents all paid up—the most respectable and substantial.

It was a strange thing that Oonagh should have given her love to this man—a problem that could not easily be solved. Love is proverbially blind, and in this instance there could be no doubt of his defective vision. Though cheerful, with the gladness of youth and innocence, Oonagh was naturally grave and reflective, composed in manner, quiet in conversation,

and collected in thought; while he was all impudence and conceit, with an amazing volubility of language, and a frivolity of character, that always prevented him from settling down to any permanent or useful occupation.

In no way was there the least similarity between the two, except that they were both young, and good-looking. And yet this poor, simple, credulous girl loved him with all the might of her affectionate heart, and all the force of her deep, thoughtful nature; while the graceless scamp only cared for the good house and farm of which she would one day be the owner.

One of the peculiarities of Shawn Sugagh, and not the least noticeable, was his extraordinary mode of speech. He always made use of the longest and most high-sounding words that he could think of, what the peasantry call jaw-breakers; and this without taking the least thought as to whether they were correct in themselves, or appropriate to the subject in hand. As a natural consequence his sentences were so involved, and his meaning so obscure, that it was not easy to follow him, particularly if his hearers were not accustomed to the peculiar style in which he delighted to indulge.

When quite a child his father had decided that

he should be a priest, the great object of an Irish peasant's ambition; and, as the first step to this desirable consummation, he was sent as soon as he was capable of learning, to acquire the first rudiments of education, to what is called a hedge schoolmaster.

In the eyes of Molloy senior, the great qualification of this man for "teaching the young idea how to shoot," was the way in which he spoke—or, rather, murdered—the Queen's English. His language was nothing but a complete jargon of long, confused words, jumbled together without propriety, or coherence of any kind. In this he resembled all of his class; for the Irish hedge schoolmasters who lived in bygone times, consideredt he study of English grammar—or, in fact, the study of any English at all—altogether unnecessary. They knew Latin extremely well, and, in most instances, had a very respectable knowledge of Greek. They were first-class arithmeticians, and possessed an acquaintance with mathematics, and algebra, that would put many college-bred men to shame; but their ignorance of English, and English literature, was as profound, as it was laughable.

This, however, was not perceptible by the poor simple country people who sent their children to be instructed by these pedagogues, and with whom

their inflated bombast passed for the most profound erudition. They were in admiration at the "tall English," though they did not well understand it, and of the Latin that they did not understand at all; and their great ambition was that their children should adopt the vocabulary of the master, and in many instances even exceed it in grotesque absurdity.

Foremost among these enlightened worthies was old Molloy, and his son fully satisfied his expectations. The boy's ear was so true, or his memory so retentive, that he found no difficulty in acquiring the lofty style of language practised at the academy he attended, which was held in a mud hovel in winter, and under the shade of a hedge in summer, from which circumstance the teachers were commonly called by the name of hedge schoolmasters.

The delight and pride of poor old Molloy, when his son first began to speak "tall English," knew no bounds. He used to listen with the greatest attention, while the young hopeful was holding forth to the gaping rustics who crowded round the fire on winter nights, and at every pause would pat him fondly on the shoulder, crying out exultingly:

"*M'ánim an Dhia*,* Johnny! There's none ov

* *M'ánim an Dhia*—My soul to God.

us able to hould a candle wid you. Folly on, my boy, folly on. Faix, you'll bate the master himself wan ov these days, an' you'll be sure to carry all before you when you go to Maynooth!"

When John was old enough and, in the opinion of "the masther," fully qualified to enter college, it was necessary that he should wait on the bishop of the diocese, to undergo an examination which if successful would obtain from that dignitary the customary certificate, without which he could not be received as a clerical student at the College of Maynooth.

Great preparations were made to enable him to appear before the bishop in a respectable manner. He got a suit of new clothes, not frieze as he had hitherto worn, but broadcloth of the deepest black; a new silk hat, and the best horse in the stable to make the journey with. It had never once occurred to either the father, or the son, that the journey would be a fruitless one, and that the return home would not be as triumphant as the going forth had been.

Alas for the vanity of earthly hopes! The edifice that had been so long in building, and had been thought so secure, came down with a crash like a house of cards. When the candidate for Holy Orders

presented himself before the bishop, he was very much disappointed by the prelate's cool reception of him. So far from being favourably impressed by his conversation and manner, the bishop was amazed, and not a little disgusted by his gross ignorance and vulgar self-conceit. In language that admitted of no mistake, he told the crestfallen youth that he was unfit to enter Maynooth, and that the best thing he could do on his return home would be to apply himself to learn some honest calling, by which he could earn his own living. John pleaded hard for a reversal of this terrible sentence, the death-blow of all his hopes; spoke of his aged father whose heart had been set on seeing him a priest; of the long years he had passed in acquiring a suitable education, and the blight that would be cast on his whole future life, if he were to return home without the certificate. But the bishop was inexorable, and refused point-blank to give it to him. To use his words on his return home in no enviable state of mind, "the ould gladiathur was somniferously oblivious ov my merit an conwersity wid the humanities, as well as wid the classical consthruction of langwidges."

Great was the astonishment in the village of Castle Cloyne and the neighbourhood, when the Buck returned home, after having been ignominiously

dismissed by the bishop. Every one made sure that he would pass muster, not only with success, but great applause, and obtain his certificate for entering college entirely as a matter of course. The seniors of the parish with whom his "tall English" passed current as the most refined and perfect specimens of language, were amazed especially, by the want of discernment shown by the bishop in failing to see the great merit of John, as well as the immense advantage that would accrue to the Church if he were ordained a priest. It was a hard nut to crack, and after smoking a great deal of tobacco, and scratching their heads a great many times, they could come to no other conclusion than that the bishop must be "near his end" when he did so foolish a thing as to reject such a promising young man, and so suitable a candidate for Holy Orders as John Molloy!

It must be admitted that those sentiments were in no degree shared by the younger men, by all of whom John was more or less disliked. They were by no means sorry for his discomfiture, which was for a long time a standing joke amongst them. One of them would slyly ask him did the bishop invite him to remain to dinner, and whether it was wine, or punch that was drunk at his table? Another would inquire with much apparent interest, what part of his

education it was that the bishop found most fault with, and what part of it met with most commendation? To all of which questions John replied with his usual cool impudence, either unconscious of the covert sarcasm and ridicule conveyed by them, or pretending to be so.

But the poor old man never got over the great disgrace of having the son on whom he had placed such mighty hopes returned on his hands like a bad shilling. In truth it was his death-blow. At first he could scarcely believe it, for he had the most implicit and childlike belief that John's great learning and "conwersity wid the consthruction of langwidges" would be at once apparent to the bishop, who would be only too glad to secure so promising a scholar for the Church. But when at last the bitter truth was made plain to him, the poor old man, disappointed in his dearest hopes, and mortified by the signal failure of all his plans, took to his bed and never left it again. His heart was broken, and he died in a very short time, with his last breath laying his death at the door of the "hard-hearted bishop that had thrated his bright boy so badly."

He had made his will some time before, leaving all he should die possessed of to his eldest son,

being quite sure that John would pass the examination for the Church, and consequently would be well provided for. This will was either forgotten by the old man in his grievous disappointment, or he felt himself unequal to making another, but from whatever cause it arose, it was certainly never revoked. At his father's death, therefore, the Buck found himself absolutely a pauper, dependent on his brother for the commonest necessaries of life. However, this did not seem to weigh very heavily on his spirits, or abate in any degree his usual careless effrontery, or gaiety of manner. His brother was unmarried, and had no objection to his company for the present, and John himself, quite confident of his own irresistible attractions, took the world easy, sure that he would set everything right by means of marriage with some girl rich enough to maintain him in idleness for the rest of his life.

And this was the man that was beloved "not wisely but too well" by the grave and thoughtful girl in the brightness of her happy youth, and the unstained purity of her innocent maidenhood! No wonder that the greatest master of the human heart that ever wrote exclaimed, "Alas, how weak a thing the heart of woman is!"

CHAPTER V.

THE BROOK AND RIVER MEET.

Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet—
Womanhood and childhood fleet.

LONGFELLOW.

CHRISTMAS soon came round again, to be immediately followed by the Shrovetide, which last season is that specially set apart by the Irish peasantry for "marrying and giving in marriage." There are two reasons for this; one is that it is the idle time of the year, and there is nothing to be done but "matchmaking"; and another is, that for the seven weeks of Lent that succeed it, marriage is not permitted by the Catholic Church, unless under very peculiar and exceptional circumstances. Therefore it is that on the approach of Shrove there is a good deal of stir and excitement among the young people and a good deal of hard bargaining among the seniors, who are

the parties that really make the matches. Many marriages take place during Shrovetide, and many more are decided on, and then broken off, and the persons concerned go elsewhere to look for husbands and wives, no bad feeling, or ill-will being manifested on either side.

For a people so imaginative and impressionable as the Irish, it is extraordinary how prosaic and practical they are in the matter of marriage. A real love-match is rare, and in nine cases out of ten the marriages of the Irish peasantry are downright Smithfield bargains. The parents of the young people arrange everything beforehand without any reference to them, and their motto is "penny for penny," or, when that is not possible, as near an approach to it as can be got. They fight and haggle over every acre and every shilling; and what involves the future happiness, or misery, of two human beings is reduced to a mere matter of pounds, shilings, and pence.

The author has often known a match, that had gone on swimmingly for a long time, broken off at the last moment, because the old father on one side would not consent to let the calf go with the cow; or the mother on the other side demurred to having the washing-tub, or the clutch of chickens, thrown in

as a make-weight with the rest of her daughter's portion. Or it will sometimes happen that one party will insist on having the fortune paid in guineas, while the other will sturdily refuse to give more than pounds.

This stumbling-block of the odd shillings has very often put a final end to many a matrimonial treaty. All the time the "boy and girl" are either making love in a corner, or listening in profound silence to the discussion going on among the elders; and whatever is the decision arrived at, they are perfectly satisfied to abide by it.

Strange to say, these mercenary marriages turn out extremely well. The newly-wedded couple settle down in their home, quite satisfied with each other, and do their duty by each other, and by their children in the most admirable manner. They have no divided interest, and they work together in harness as smoothly, and amicably as if they had married for love. Conjugal infidelity on either side is almost unknown; and when an instance of it unhappily occurs, which is very rarely indeed, it is looked upon by the people with the greatest horror, and disgust.

One evening in the beginning of this particular Shrovetide, there was a wedding in the neighbour-

hood, and Paddy and Molly went to it after their day's work was done, promising to return without fail at twelve o'clock. Oonagh did not go, for her father had been all day in the next town on some business, and had returned home wet and weary; so she remained to give him his supper, a duty that she never delegated to any other person. At such times she always managed to have something better for him than the usual fare, a fried egg, a rasher of bacon, or if he was wet, as was the case this evening, a tumbler of hot punch. When he had eaten his supper, and settled himself in the chimney corner to smoke his pipe before going to bed, Oonagh put away the table, swept up the hearth, threw on the fire an immense log of bogwood that was to serve for light for the rest of the night, and then when nothing more remained to be done, got her knitting, and sat down at the opposite side of the fire.

It was a wild night out of doors; one of those nights on which stern Winter, knowing that his reign is nearly over, makes a vigorous effort to retain his supremacy. The wind was howling round the farm-house, and the rain in frequent gusts beat against the windows with almost the force of hail. The cold and darkness outside made the warmth and light of the kitchen doubly pleasant from the contrast. It

was a picture of comfort taken altogether; homely and humble, but natural and peaceful, and in harmony with the two figures that were its most salient features. The large kitchen, with its simple furniture as clean as scrubbing could make it, lighted up by the fitful glare of the bogwood; the "blazing ingle and the clean hearthstone," at one side of which sat the silver-haired old man, and at the other his daughter just entering on womanhood, with a face that might have been thought too grave, and serious for her years, only that it was brightened up by a sweet and pleasant smile. As if to complete the picture a large dog—a cross between a Newfoundland and a retriever—lay stretched in luxurious ease on the hearthstone before the fire. Bran, called after the famous dog of the Irish hero, Fin McCoul, was one of the most intelligent of his race, and the farmer's special favourite and attendant both at home, and whenever he went abroad.

When Martin had smoked his pipe, and laid it and his tobacco box in a little niche in the wall that had been made expressly for that purpose when the house was built, his daughter knew that he was in the mood for a little conversation.

"You never would guess, Oonagh, who it was that

was married istherday," he said; "no, not if you wor guessin' for a month ov Sundays."

"I never could guess it, so you may just as well put me out ov pain an' tell it at wanst."

"I suppose so. Well, then, it was Judy."

"Judy!!!" Three notes of admiration can scarcely express the astonishment that was both in the face and voice of Oonagh.

"Fake an' sure, it is. An' you wouldn't ever guess who the husband is."

"Is it Dick Considine? He was the boy she dhramed ov on All-Hallow Eve."

"Well, he's the boy she's married to anyway. She'll have a good life wid him, for he's a very dacent boy, an' well off."

Oonagh became very thoughtful. Here was the first of the marriages that had been shadowed forth by the spell of the dumb cake. Judy had declared that nothing on earth would make her marry "Mad Dick Considine," and now when only four months had gone by, she had become "Mad Dick's" wife!

"You're vexed because you worn't axed to the weddin'," he said, noticing her silence; "but you have no call to be vexed, for they had no weddin'

at all. They wint to the priest's house airly in the mornin', an' as soon as they were married, they wint home to Dick's place up in the mountains, for his father is dyin' an' he didn't think it right to have any weddin' o' count ov it."

"Well, Judy might have let me know ov it."

"She couldn't do that. The match was made in the greatest hurry intirely, be Judy's stepmother, an' she run the poor girl out ov the house before she could say either yes or no to it. So the neighbours say, anyhow.

"I often h'ard her say in this very house that she never would marry that same boy, and hated the very sight ov him."

"Well, so itself. It's little ov her talk her father or stepmother would put up wid. Poor Dick was ever an' always fond ov her, an' offered to marry her without a penny, or anything but the clothes she stood up in; my hand to you her stepmother would stand no arguin' after *that*. Dick will be a worse husband to her than I take him to be, if she isn't a dale happier wid him, than she was wid her stepmother. She was a wild slip, but she is very young, an' livin' up there in that lonesome house in the mountains will tame her a bit."

It was hard to imagine laughing, joyous Judy

in her lonely home "up in the mountains." She was, as it were, buried alive, far away from all who knew and loved her, and alone with the man that she herself had called "Mad Dick." Oonagh wondered if she should ever again see Judy; or if they did meet after long years, would they both be greatly changed. How well for us it is that the future is hidden from our sight by an impenetrable veil! Had the time, and place, and circumstances of her next meeting with the friends of her youth been then revealed to Oonagh, the grief and horror of the terrible vision would go far to deprive her almost of reason. But it was mercifully withheld from her view.

"There was great matchmakin' in town to-day," said the old man after a while. "There wasn't a public-house that wasn't chokefull of people matchmakin' for themselves. A good many of the matches that wor made to-day will be in broken chaneys to-morrow mornin'; but that's neither here nor there. We have a good many days yet before Shrove Tuesday comes round, an' a power of matches will be made, an' broke agin, betune this an' then."

There was another pause, this time longer than the last, for Oonagh had become very grave, and

silent, as she thought how soon the spell of the dumb cake had begun to work.

"I am glad that Paddy an' Molly went off to the weddin', and that the both of us are here togither, for, Oonagh asthore, I have something to say that no wan is to hear barrin' your own self."

The girl's face got scarlet at her father's words, for she had full knowledge of what he was going to tell her.

"Why, thin, who do you think came match-making to myself to-day? Well, I may as well tell you at wanst, for you're a mighty bad hand at guessin'. It was Michael Molloy, an' his hopeful brother the Buck! Faix, tis the thruth that I'm telling you!"

Martin McDermott thought Buck Molloy's coming to him for a wife was such a good joke, that he laughed loud and long, and it was only after a little that he noticed that his daughter did not join in his mirth, but looked very grave and sad.

"An' what answer did you give them, father?" she said after a little time.

"What answer did I give 'em, is it? Faix, thin, a mighty short one intirely. They won't come to me for a wife an' a fortune agin in a hurry; I promise you that."

She bent over her knitting as if a stitch had dropped, and she was trying to catch it up again, but in reality to hide her tears which had begun to flow. Her father watched her for a little time, and then said in a kind voice, "Lay by that stocking, *anien machree,* and come hither, an' sit thee down alongside me."

She threw aside her work, and taking her stool sat down near him, laying her hand on his knee in her usual affectionate manner.

"You never towld your ould father a lie, Oonagh," he said fondly, "an' what's more, 'tisn't in you to tell wan. Did you know that the Molloys were to come to me to-day to ax me for you?"

"I did, father."

"I knew you'd tell me the thruth. An' was it wid your own consint that they came?"

"Yes, father; wid my full consint."

"An' do you care for that fool, an' would you marry him if you had your own will?"

"Yes, if I had your consint and blessin', but not without it."

"O blessed Saints above! But this bates all that I ever h'ard tell of. Why, child, he is an *Omadhawn,* a fool that hasn't got a grain of sinse in his head, an' I'm not the only wan that'll tell you that."

"He is not an *Omadhawn,* nor anything like it, but a handsome clever boy, an' if he had anything to do, he knows how to do it," replied Oonagh stoutly. "You desired me to tell you the thruth, and you done well, for 'tis always the best. I *am* fond of John, an' he's fond of me, and if we wor married we'd be very happy togither wid the blessing of God, an' your blessin', father." And as she spoke the last words she looked up in his face with a wistful, pleading expression in her sweet, earnest eyes.

"I'm heart sorry to hear this from you, my child," said the old man gravely.

"Oh, father! why do you say that? What raison have you to mislike poor John? He's a dacent couple's son, an' he has great larnin' intirely. He's a well-behaved honest boy, an' neither a drunkard nor a thief."

"But that's nothing; he's an idler an' a shooler, goin' about from house to house, lookin' for divarshun for himself, instid ov doing a little honest work to help his brother that has the cost ov feedin', an clothin' him. The swaggerin' fool! He has deludhered you wid his rocks ov tall English, an' thrown dust in your eyes. But he isn't able to deludher *me;* I'm too ould a bird to be caught wid all his chaff."

The girl was by this time fairly crying, for her hopes of gaining the old man's consent to her marriage with the Buck, were becoming fainter every moment.

"I know what you're thinkin' ov, child," he went on; "it's that I'm very hard, an' cruel to you intirely, an' that's what I wouldn't like my little girl would be thinkin' ov her ould father. I can't help that, an' I suppose you can't help it yourself. But if you think it now, the day will surely come to think the very conthrairy. Listen hither to me, *'a graw geál;** you only know this boy a short time, an' you know me all your life, an' you know likewise that I'm your best friend, as well as your ouldest wan."

"I know that well, father, an' you may be sure that as I never went agin' you before, I'm not goin' to begin now," she sobbed through her tears.

"My good girl you wor! Sure I knew I had only to say the word to you. An' now I'll make it all plain to you: Shawn Sugagh has no manes ov his own, an' his brother won't give him anything. If you married him, he'd walk in here ov coorse, an' hang up his hat—he has brass enough for twice as much—an' very soon he'd make ducks an' drakes ov what is here, an' give neither ov us any thanks. We're only

* *'A graw geál*—My bright love.

able to pay what's due ov us, an' keep the roof over our heads by the dint ov hard work; an' how would it be wid us, if we had him a walkin' gintleman on the flure wid his hands in his pockets all the year round? An' will I tell you what would become ov you, poor child, whin I'd be gone, an' my time here can't be very long now. The sheriff would be down on you before you knew where you wor, an' the good farm that belonged to my father an' to his father before him, would be taken from you by Mr. Dillon for his rint. That's what your story will be, child, if you're so foolish as to marry that idle scamp, that cares for nothing nor no one in the world but his own four bones. Oh, Oonagh darlin'!" he continued, laying his hand tenderly on the head that was bowed on his knee, "don't break your poor ould father's heart! Don't sind him home to his people before his time!"

"Don't say another word, for God's sake," she replied, raising her head, and smiling through her tears. "The man was never born for whose sake I'd break my poor ould father's heart."

"My own good little girl!" he cried, stooping down to kiss her. "My own sensible, wise Oonagh! But mind, I won't ax any promise from you; I'll only ax you to wait for a while, and see for yourself what sort the boy is."

"Father, I'll make you a promise, an' that's that I never will marry either John Molloy, or any wan else while you live, without your full consint. I make you that promise from myself, an' I mane to keep it, wid the help ov God."

"'Tis before me how it would all be," he said softly as if to himself, "just the same as if 'twas wrote down in black an' white. The kind ov life my little girl would have wid 'Pleasant Jack' wouldn't be at all the kind of life that she had wid the ould man; it wouldn't be 'pleasant' at all, by no manner ov manes. That idle shoolin' fella would never settle down to honest work, but to make up for that, he'd make *her* a common slave. He'd be at every fair an' market, sportin' an' spindin' my child's manes, and she'd be all the while breakin' her poor heart at home; an' very soon when the rint wouldn't be to the fore, Mr. Dillon would put the two ov 'em out on the road. He's a good landlord—no betther—an' has great feelin' for his ould tenants; but sure it stands to raison that he wouldn't always take excuses in place ov money. May God break hard fortune before my little girl's feet!"

"Say no more, father," said Oonagh, "an' don't throuble your mind about what will never happen, plase God. Sure I gave you hand an' word, an' you know that I won't go back ov it."

"That's right, *avourneen;* an' you may be sure the day will come when you'll be glad you follyed the advice ov the ould father, an' made the ind of his life comfortable an' happy."

"Wid the help ov God I'll do that, never fear. You have only myself in the whole world, an' it would be a quare thing surely if I was to turn agin you, or even to think ov it. Faix it would be the fine young man indeed that would persuade me to such a thing!"

Once more he laid his hand on her head and blessed her with a blessing that was not the less fervent from being silent, while he thanked God for having given him so good and dutiful a child.

"I think I'll go to bed now, *a villish,**" he said rising. "I'm very tired afther the day, but so itself; I have a light heart goin', thanks to you, Oonagh. I'm in dhread you'll have a long watch ov it, before Paddy an' Molly come home from the weddin'. 'Tis airly yet in the night."

When old Martin MacDermott went to bed, his daughter remained sitting by the fire, very wretched if the truth must be told. When she found herself alone, the bitter tears she could no longer restrain

* *A villish*—My sweetest.

gushed forth, and she wept long and silently over the destruction of all the bright hopes and beautiful dreams that had formed all the sunshine of her life. In no single respect did she agree with her father in the estimate he had formed of her lover's character and disposition. She believed that estimate was founded on prejudice and a rooted dislike, for which she could in no way account. She still believed that Pleasant John was all that her fond credulous heart had imagined him to be—as bright and amiable as he was handsome, and that when she consented to renounce him, she put away all happiness from her future life. But for all that, she was unshaken in her loyalty to her father, and fully determined that her duty to him should be paramount to her affection for her lover. For no lover—though he were handsomer and brighter than John, though she thought that hardly possible—could she disobey her only parent, or by any act of hers help to bring down his good gray head with sorrow to the grave. He had worked very hard all his life for her, and to leave her a comfortable home when he should be taken from her. Now she remembered her mother's last words to her, "Oonagh dear, when I'm gone take care ov the poor ould man for my sake." Up to this, she had obeyed the last command of her dead mother to the best of her power,

and her reward had come to her in happy days and peaceful nights, and in the consciousness that she was doing her duty, and duty, in the eyes of Oonagh, was a very sacred thing. Young as she was, she made it her watchword, and felt that while she followed in the straight and well-defined path to which it pointed, she could not go far wrong.

Now, too, she remembered the dream of All-Hallow Eve. One part of the spell had already come true, for Judy was married to "Mad Dick Considine!" This was complete proof to the mind of the poor ignorant girl that the two other dreams would also come true, though when, or by what means, she could not imagine. And the man that Susie Burke had dreamed of was John Molloy—her own John! She had, at the time, listened to Susie telling them this with silent incredulity; but now she began to think that such a marriage would most certainly take place, that her cousin would supplant her in the heart of her lover, and be his wife as she herself had one day hoped to be.

It would be unjust, she thought, to blame Susie for this, or feel any jealousy or resentment towards her. It was the fate that had been marked out for her!

A common Irish maxim is, that "what's allotted

can't be blotted," and the truth of this piece of fatalism was not doubted by Oonagh for a moment. No Oriental believed in *kismet* more devoutly, and unquestioningly, than did this credulous country-girl believe in destiny; from the action of which, and its effects on her future life, no efforts of her own could ever struggle against or avoid.

She did not forget her own part in the weird drama of the dumb cake. She was not destined to be married to Pleasant John or to anyone else, for was not "Oonagh MacDermott" inscribed on the lid of the coffin that had been brought into her room in the dream, and laid down in silence beside her bed?

It had been only a dream, then—the merest shadow; but she was now as sure as of her own existence that the dream would come true, and the shadow would one day assume form, and substance. There was to be no marriage for her—that she was as much convinced of as if she were standing, not at the opening of her life, but at its close, when she could look back on all her past years, with their thoughts, words, and deeds spread out before her as if on a map. It was decreed that she should die unmarried, and that the name on her coffin should be none but her maiden name.

Why, she asked herself, had she been so foolish as to have a hand in that dreadful dumb cake? It was wicked, sinful, and condemned by the Church, and yet she had done it, and now she was beginning to feel some of the punishment due to so great a sin. God had for His own wise purposes hidden the future from her eyes, and she with bold irreverence had sought to know what He had thought fit to conceal. Never again would she do any spell or charm; she had had enough of such wicked practices, and more than enough. But that could not efface what had been done, or make sufficient atonement for it. The sting remained in her heart, and would remain there for ever.

After some time the poor girl wiped away her tears, and knelt down beside the dying embers to say her evening prayers and recite the Rosary. This exercise brought her grieving heart much peace; and when, her prayers over, she once more sat down, it was not to weep again but to try to brace herself up for the battle of life that was likely to be a hard one for her. Henceforth she would have no duty but to obey her mother's last command, and take care of the old man, and prove to him that the love and care he had lavished on her, had not been bestowed on a thankless child. It was a long and a hard battle

she fought with her own heart—this poor ignorant girl, not yet twenty years of age—as she sat alone at midnight in cold and darkness, but in the end she came off the victor. That hour of lonely self-communion had wrought in her the work of many long years. That one hour of serious thought had transformed her from a child into an earnest and deep-hearted woman, who should now put away childish things; into a responsible being who was to remember that one day she would have to render an account of what she had done with the life that had been bestowed on her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "HANDFASTING."

This was the time when Oonagh
Stole out to meet her barefoot love.
JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN.

ON the following Sunday, which happened to be the last before Lent, Oonagh was alone in the farmhouse. It was evening, and that hopeful, gracious time of the year when we notice that the days are growing long and bright, and the hedges and wayside bushes are putting forth their tender green buds, timorously at first, but soon making vigorous growth, as if they had taken courage from the few gleams of sunshine that occasionally lighted up the wintry landscape. Molly was engaged in the dairy, and the farmer and his man Paddy had gone to drive the cows home to their quarters for the night. Although the evening was fine, there was a frosty feeling in the air that

made the girl draw near to the fire, having first put down more turf, so as to have a good fire when her father should come in to supper. A large pot of potatoes was hanging on the crane over the fire, and the large kitchen table was drawn to the vacant space before it, in readiness for the evening meal.

Suddenly Oonagh's attention was aroused by the sound of a well-known voice, that was made more audible every moment as the owner of it approached the house. It was a man's voice, very harsh and cracked, altogether out of harmony with either time or tune; and the owner of this voice was no other than the parish *omadhawn*.

> If I had a small cot on the ocean to row,
> I'd follow my darlin' wherever he'd go.
> I'd rather have my thrue love to sport and to play
> Than all the red goold that's on land or on say.

Before the singer could begin another verse of this love-song the latch of the door was raised, and he entered, with the usual salutation of "God save all here."

"God save you kindly," answered Oonagh. "Is that yourself, Thady? Sit down, an' have an air ov the fire."

This invitation was gladly accepted by the new

comer, who had no settled home, lived no one knew how, but to whom everyone was kind and forbearing, except the little boys, who delighted in teasing and making fun of the poor fool, after the fashion of all their race from time immemorial. He sat down in the chimney corner opposite Oonagh, and stretched out his bare feet and legs, that were hardly protected from the severity of the weather by the old trousers that were not half long enough, to the grateful warmth of the fire.

"You come in good time," observed Oonagh, "for the potatoes are down for the supper; an' I'm sure that you're hungry as well as cold."

"I do be often cowld," said the poor fool, looking ruefully as he spoke at the old rags that served him for raiment; "but sure I wouldn't be so long, if God would only put it into some good Christian's heart to gi' me a shuit ov clothes."

"Well, Thady, I'll see to-morrow what I can do for you," she said in answer to this broad hint. "I'll steal the kay ov my father's chest, and who knows but I may find some ould things in it that would fit you?"

At the splendid prospect of getting the "new shuit" his face expanded into a broad grin of delight. Oonagh's little joke of stealing her father's key was

taken by him in a literal sense, and he winked knowingly, to give her to understand that he knew her secret and would not betray her.

"An' what's the best news wid you, Thady?" she said in a little time. "An' what did you do wid yourself since I saw you last?"

"Och! I was here, an' there, an' everywhere, like the bad weather, looking out to see where I'd get a shuit ov clothes comin' on the winther, but sorra wan ga' me a ha'porth," replied Thady, whose thoughts seemed to be altogether taken up by the all-important subject of the clothes.

"The Shrove is a'most over, Thady, an' you're not married yet. Why is that?"

"Eych! What little concern marriage is givin' me, if you knew but all," he said, with a bashful look that was very comical. "There's time enough to think ov them things in another year or so. But why did *you* let the Shrove pass you, Oonagh? Sure we war all expectin' you'd give us a rousin' weddin'. Faix 'twas all your own faut, little girl; sure the world knows that you have bachelors galore."

"Well, what good is that when none ov 'em axed me?"

"Lave off your thricks now, Oonagh. Sure, isn't

wan ov 'em waiting for you this very minute down at the well?"

"What was that you said, Thady?"

"Aha, see that now! An' she purtended just now that she hadn't any bachelor at all," cried Thady, with a burst of foolish laughter. "Go long out ov that wid you."

"Sure, 'tis yourself that's purtendin' now. I don't b'lieve that any wan at all is at the well."

"Isn't there?"—indignantly. "Fake an' sure, there is. What will you gi' me now, if I tell you that Buck Molloy is smokin' his pipe alongside the well, waitin' for you? An' if you won't b'lieve me, maybe you'll b'lieve *that*."

He took a crumpled piece of not too clean paper out of his ragged pocket, and handed it to her with a great flourish. This precious *billet doux* was as follows:

"If you would have the shuparior condisention to perambulate down towards the well, it would obligate in the highest degree your adorable lover. If you don't come, I am determined to put a pariod to my existence as the bearer can testify. My own darlin', don't refuse the last dyin' speech an' confession ov yours to command J. Molloy."

"When did John give you this?" she asked,

while she twisted the paper irresolutely round her fingers.

"Why thin, just as I was comin' in the *borheen*. 'An' tell her,' ses he, 'that she may as well come out and spake to me, for I won't lave out the place until I see her, if I had to stop here till morning,' ses he."

She was for a moment uncertain what to do, but finally decided on complying with her lover's wish, and giving him the meeting he asked for so passionately. On arriving at this conclusion, she by no means intended any disobedience to her father's commands; she merely meant to tell John that all must be over between them, at least till he came with her father's sanction and approbation. To tell him this would come better from herself, she thought, than from anyone else, and she owed it to his love for her, to give him a last interview. It should be the very last, she said to herself, and henceforth when they met, it should be as friends, not as lovers.

"Will you watch the potatoes for a start, Thady, while I run down to the well an' see what bisness John Molloy has ov me?" she said; "an' when you think they're done, you can call Molly in from the dairy, if I'm not back agin by that time."

She caught up an old shawl, and drawing it over her head went out of the house. Though the evening

was cold, her face was burning at the consciousness that for the first time in her life, she was doing what had an underhand, clandestine appearance. But she felt strong in a sense of rectitude, and though she dearly loved the man she was going to meet, yet her loyalty and duty to her father were still greater than her love.

When the Buck saw her coming, he sprang up to meet her, to put his arm round her waist and kiss her cheek in the old tender way that she remembered so well. She submitted unresistingly to his caress, knowing that it was for the last time.

"'*A graw geál,* I knew you'd come to me!" he exclaimed, with the passionate ring in his voice that he could assume at will. "Oh darlin'! if you only knew how I was excruciating to behold you, an' to communicate to the tindherness ov your sensibility all the injurious condemnation, that I had to put up wid from that ould ancient father ov yours."

Even in his excitement and anger he could not lay aside what old Martin had contemptuously called his "tall English," it had become so habitual to him.

"I hope, John, that you won't forget in anything you say ov him that he *is* my father, an' a good father too. If you have anything disrespectful to say ov him,

you mustn't say it while I'm to the fore. Mind that, now, before we go any farther."

"But did he make any revelation to you ov the great intherview my brother an' myself had wid him?"

"He did, an' I'm very sorry for the way that it ended, an' I can't say more than that. 'Tis a great pity intirely that ye didn't all undherstand wan another betther than what ye did. It was my prayer that all would be right betune ye, but God did not see fit to grant that prayer, for His own wise inds, ov coorse."

"Wid great submission, Oonagh, I must declare that your sintiments aren't what I can consthrue into either sinse or rationation. What right has your father to put his intherdiction betune us at all at all?'

"Because he *is* my father, John, an' a very good raison it is. No wan has a betther right."

"Blood alive! are you goin' to turn conspirathor agin me an' confedherate wid him? I must say, Oonagh, it was not that sort of ambiguousness I expected from you."

"I'm not turnin' agin you; but you know, John, that I must folly my father's advice, an' be said an' led by him. It's my duty, an' my wish as well."

"You don't care for me, Oonagh, or love me, as

you said you did, often an' often. All your philanthropy an' jocularity are for the ould man, an' not for me."

"He has the best right, John," she replied meekly. "I am all he has in the wide world, an' it would be a poor case surely if I was to fail him now when he wants me most."

"An' do I count for nothing in your contemplations? I'm beginning to think that if you wor stiffer with him, and held out more persuasion, he wouldn't be intirely so obdurated an' contumacious."

"I did my very best—indeed, indeed, I did; but he wouldn't hear to a word I said," and as she spake her eyes filled with tears.

He actually ground his teeth with rage, but between her own agitation and the darkness of the evening she did not perceive how angry he had become.

"Well, Oonagh," trying to control himself and speak to her in the old caressing way, "as your father hasn't the proper feelin' for us, an' won't be subversive to right rason and thrue love, we must only take the law into our own hands. If he won't extenuate his consint an' blessin' to us an' our marriage, we have only to get married without 'em."

"No, John; we won't do anything whatever ov the kind," she said quietly but firmly; "our marriage would have no blessin' from God if my father's blessin' wasn't on it likewise. If I was to do such a thing, it would be aiquil to killin' him, an' that I won't do for you or any other man that ever stud in shoe-leather. The last words my mother ever said to me was: 'Take care ov the ould man, Oonagh, for my sake,' an' when she said it, an' looked so pitifully in my face, I fell on my knees by her bedside, an' promised her that I'd be a dutiful, lovin' child to him for her sake, as well as his own. An' that promise made her die happy. When I meet my mother in heaven, John, I'll be able, wid the help ov God, to look her straight in the face, an' tell her that I kept faithful the promise I made her."

"Sure, marryin' a handsome boy, that's so jovial and obsequious wid you, an' that dotes on the very ground you walk on, won't have any hand in killin' him. A tough ould man like that won't break his heart for such a thrifle."

"He never ga' me a cross word or a sour look," she went on, as if to herself, "an' he has no wan to care for him in his old age but me. It would be a poor return for all his love to grieve him or break his heart."

"There won't be no broken hearts at all, I tell you. He'll be highly oblivious of our stolen match in a few days, and say to himself that what can't be cured must be endured. He'll sind for us both wid great rejoicin' an' contrition, an' then there will be nothing at all among us but satisfaction an' plinty, society an' harmony."

But this glowing picture failed to dazzle the eyes of Oonagh or change her resolution, and for answer she only shook her head.

"You're just as hard-hearted an' obdurated as your father," he said bitterly.

"No, John, I am not. My heart is only too soft where you are concerned; an' you ought to know that the girl who begins her married life by disobeyin' her parents can't make a very good wife. There is no use at all in our remainin' here arguin', for if we wor at it till mornin', I have only the wan answer for you."

"An' what may that be, might I ask invidiously?"

"It is that we must have patience, an' wait a little. Who knows but my father will soften to us —an' he will, I know, when he sees that we won't anger or disobey him. An', John, mind this, an' be full sure ov it, whatever day or night he gives his consint, I'm ready an' willin' to go wid you

before the priest. I can't say any fairer than that."

"*Thokes an Dioul é** for a story!" he burst out, his anger getting the better of his prudence. "Who do you think is obligated to be dancin' attindance on him till he's foolish an' dotin'? That very shuparior dutifulness doesn't shuit my ticket at all. Ov coorse it doesn't. The queen's eldest daughter would be well airned by so thremenduous an apprentiship as that. 'Tis the thruth I'm tellin' you, Oonagh, an' you may like it, or lump it, whichever plases you best."

The instant after he had made this rude as well as impolitic speech, he could have bitten his tongue for his folly. But the mischief had been done, and he saw that she was seriously and justly offended. She wiped away the tears that were flowing fast, and drew back a little, saying with an air and tone of proud composure:

"Very well, John. I'm thankful that you let me see your mind before it was too late. You are free to go as you came, for if you remimber I didn't sind for you to come here to-night. An' there's no call at all for you to dance any attindance on my father, or on me either. An' wherever you go, or whoever

* *Thokes an Dioul é*—The devil take it.

you go coortin' to, 'tis all wan to Oonagh. I'm an honest man's child, an' I never done nothing that would make me hide my face, an' there's as good fish in the say as ever came out ov it. You can go your way an' welcome, an' I'll go mine, an' that's to folly my dead mother's commands, an' stick to the poor ould man that stuck well to her an' me. An' I thank God that ga' me the grace to put your timptation far from me, an' kept me from consintin' to what would lie hard an' heavy on my heart at my dyin' day."

"Oh, Oonagh, asthore machree! don't be vexed wid your own poor John for a few untimeous words. Sure I never thought you'd impressionate that a way what I said in a hurry, that didn't come from the heart at all but only was a slip ov the tongue. Make friends wid me now, my darlin', an' let us be as harmonious as ever."

He drew her towards him, and kissed her with much apparent affection, and Oonagh, woman-like, forgave him. He ceased to press her on the private marriage, for he saw that on that point she was inflexible, and that neither his entreaties, nor her own great love, could move her by as much as a hair's breadth from the path of duty. While mentally comparing her to a mule, a pig, and every other animal whose obstinacy is proverbial, he wisely re-

solved on lowering his demands, and trying to get a part as he could not obtain the whole.

"Well, darlin'," he said in his tenderest tone and most insinuating manner, "as you objectionate so completely to an instantaneous marriage, we'll say no more about it. I wouldn't fret or afflictionate you for the whole world, nor have your purty eyes inundated wid tears. But if we can't be married, sure we can be handfasted together. You can't objectionate to that, surely."

"I don't like handfastin' at all. 'Tis not a thing for a dacent girl to have any call to," she said dubiously.

"Let me see if I have the sixpence about me," he said, affecting not to hear her protest against this ante-nuptial engagement, which in the south of Ireland is considered almost as binding and sacred as marriage itself. He went through the farce of searching his pockets for the sixpence, although the schemer had taken very good care to provide himself with the coin in question before he came, so as to be prepared for the handfasting, in case she should refuse to consent to an elopement.

"Now, *'acushla geál*, we're all right. You're to put your right hand into my right hand, an' rehearse all the expressions I propose to you afther me."

She neither gave nor withheld her hand, but he took it, and grasping it firmly, began to say the formula of the "handfasting":

"I promise an' vow in the most solemn manner to be thrue an' faithful to you, Oonagh MacDermott, an' to hold myself bound to you as my future wife in all things; an' I promise to marry you as soon as it is convanient to both ov us, an' whin circumstances will permit." Having gone through this form, he told her that now it was her turn to repeat the words after him.

Oonagh said the words after him mechanically, but on concluding added, "provided that my father gives his consent." And not only that, but she pronounced them with emphasis and firmness.

"You might just as well have left that last part out totationally," he said, much displeased. "I didn't rehearse them words to you at all."

"But they was in my mind, an' they may as well be out as in. If I didn't say them, I'd only be desavin' you; an' no man shall have any call to charge me wid doin' that. They're said now, an' I mane to stand by 'em."

"Well, Oonagh, I dealt fairer by you than you done by me, for I didn't put in any clauses ov surrender. Now gi' me your hand, an' let us go

through this little bisness agin; for there must be recicoprocity in it, if it is to have any valuation at all in it."

"No, John; I'll have no more ov it. If you're not satisfied wid what I said there's no harm done; an' my hand to you I'll not keep you to your part ov it."

He pretended not to hear this, but by a dexterous twist of his forefinger and thumb he broke the sixpence into two equal parts, giving one to her, and retaining the other for himself. She put her half into the corner of the handkerchief she wore round her neck, and knotting it tightly put the knotted end into her bosom, so that it could not be seen by anyone.

"I'm sure ov you now, *'a colleen dhass,*" he said fondly. "I know well that you'll never bate a rethrate from them words durin' duration."

"I never will, John; you may be sure ov that. But all the same you wor just as sure ov me before; for when I say a thing I mane it, an' intind to stand by it, as if I was book-sworn."

"Well, darlin', my love for you is so shuparior an' ov so intoxicatin' a *characther* that I thought I never could make my own ov you intirely until the sixpence was divisioned between us. An' sure 'tisn't

yourself, *'a graw bawn,* that will blame me for that wid your own purty mouth?"

"No, dear; but I feel that somehow I love you all the more for it. But we must part now, for I see Bran running down the hill beyant there, an' that's a sure sign that my father isn't far behind him. The poor dog is so glad to be comin' home that he always runs on first. Indeed I can't stay longer, for I wouldn't like that for the first time in his life the ould man would have to say, 'Where is Oonagh?' I'm heart sorry, John, that I can't ax you to come in an' take pot-luck wid us, but it is far betther for you not to come near the place yet awhile, till I can manage to make things a little smoother for both ov us wid my father. He loves me dearly, an' won't refuse to make me happy when he knows my heart is in it."

"An' whin are we to confabulate together again, my darlin' girl?"

"I can't tell that, but you may be sure as soon as I can do it quietly I'll sind for you. But I own that I don't like these stolen meetings, an' I won't have no more ov 'em. My father wouldn't like 'em, nor Father O'Rafferty, nor Miss Grace; an' they're not things for a dacent girl to have any call to at all. But we can meet every Sunday afther mass, an' I

have no objection that you'd come a part ov the way home wid me in the face ov day, an' everywan to see us—yourself, an' me, an' Molly, for we go together always to mass on Sundays."

With this permission he was obliged to be satisfied, and after a very tender parting—for the simple girl now regarded herself as his betrothed wife—she went back to the house before her father arrived, and just as Molly was taking the huge pot of potatoes off the fire. In this she was assisted by the fool, who, to judge by his wistful looks, and the eagerness with which he offered his services, was much in want of a supper, and fully determined on making good use of the food that was soon to be placed on the table.

CHAPTER VII.

DARK DAYS.

Fathers have flinty hearts.

SHAKESPEARE.

As has been said in the preceding chapter, the ceremony of "handfasting" is regarded by the Munster peasantry as binding and solemn as the formal betrothal that in Germany, and other Continental nations precedes marriage, and is considered as scarcely inferior to the nuptial rite. The broken sixpence is a tangible evidence of the mutual contract, and by females is looked upon with almost as much reverence as the wedding ring, until the time when that symbol of wedlock shall be placed on the finger in the ceremony of marriage. It is considered as a religious promise solemnly made, and to be kept very strictly by the two contracting parties. It sometimes happens that the fresh, dis-

interested love of youth will give way under the pressure of parental authority, the temptation of more attractive or wealthier ties, or the corrosive influence of time that robs all such romance of its pristine gloss. Sometimes the day will come when the "boy" will throw away or give back his half of the sixpence to his betrothed, or when she will relegate her half to the bottom of her "chest" to forget it, or if she remembers it at all, with a kind of tender, bashful regret for the pleasant days of her long-past youth.

In persuading Oonagh to go through the ceremony of "handfasting" with him, the Buck showed that he thoroughly understood the simple earnestness of her character, and the tenacity with which she would be sure to cling to what in her eyes was a very sacred promise. He knew that he could rely on her constancy, not less than on her affection, and that having entered on so solemn a compact, she would observe it conscientiously, and be faithful to him at all risks, and under all circumstances. There was not much fear of his fidelity to her, for his own interest—always the first consideration with him—would induce him to be faithful to the contract he had made with her. He was poor and wanted to be rich, he was idle and wanted to live an indolent,

comfortable life, without having to work more than he had a mind to do, and he saw no way to such a desirable state of things but to marry Oonagh, and have nothing to do when he came to Ballycross except, as her father had said, to "hang up his hat." His brother would in all probability be married next Shrove, and his wife, like all the other wives John knew, would like to have her house to herself, and her affection for her husband may not be extended to the brother who was a great burden, and gave him very little help. His brother often found great fault with him for his idleness; how much more loudly and constantly then would a sister-in-law do so, who would be a comparative stranger, and whose interest would be altogether separate from his! It was by no means a pleasant prospect to have to look forward to, and he saw no escape from it but a wealthy marriage, or what would be such to a man in his position of life. The farm of Ballycross was one of the best on the estate of Castle Cloyne, and besides this, it was well known that old Martin had something laid by for the proverbial rainy day. The best of all was that the heiress of this goodly heritage was neither old nor ugly, but a very pretty young girl, who was also greatly attached to the fine, handsome fellow who honoured her by accepting her

affection. He liked to have everything made pleasant for him, and it *was* pleasant to know that Oonagh was just what she was, instead of being a woman that he could not love or be happy with. But had she been a very Gorgon, he would have married her all the same, for it was the good farm and comfortable house that were ever in his mind, and the heiress thereof was but the necessary adjunct. A wife was the pill that should be swallowed before he could enter into possession, and it was a matter of much self-congratulation with him that it could be easily swallowed, and was rather agreeable than otherwise. He was fond of Oonagh, after a fashion of his own; her devotion flattered his vanity, which was commensurate with his avarice, and no doubt of her constancy ever crossed his mind. He felt quite confident that with time and some skilful management on his own part, he would be able to overcome her scruples, and induce her to consent either to an elopement, or a private marriage. Once either event took place, he would be in a position to dictate his own terms to the old man, and compel him to surrender unconditionally. He should be made to pay well for all the trouble and annoyance he was giving them at present, and the thought of how he would turn the screw when it would be in his own hands,

was one that gave the Buck unmingled satisfaction. The house and farm should be made over to himself at once, and when he was lord and master, the old man should be satisfied with a seat in the chimney corner; or if not content with that inferior place in a house that till then had been his own, he would be at perfect liberty to take himself off to the poor-house!

It was the old story over again of the woman who had expected great profit from the sale of her chickens before they had been even hatched. In making those calculations he did not remember the strength and firmness of Oonagh's character, or the depth of her religious principles. Her love for him was very great, but her sense of duty was stronger still. Her heart was very tender and loving, but under such firm control that they who knew her best often said "she never allowed it to run away with her head." The only time that her head had lost its supremacy, and allowed her heart to get the mastery, was when she had been so foolish as to give the rich treasure of her love to such a mean, selfish, worthless fellow as John Molloy.

When Lent was over, and marriage was permitted once more to be celebrated in the Catholic Church, the Buck, no way abashed by the ill-success of his

former proposals to Martin MacDermott for the hand of his daughter, renewed them, and again met with the same cold reply as before. If there was any difference it was decidedly for the worse, for the old man not only rejected his proposal, but absolutely forbade him to come to Ballycross any more.

This contumelious proceeding was so galling to the vanity of the Buck, that he retorted with more warmth than wisdom, and words ran so high between them that Martin declared that though Oonagh was his only child, he would see her in her coffin rather than see her the wife of such a thorough blackguard as John Molloy had that day shown himself to be. The next time they met the old man stared full in the young one's face, and passed on his way without any sign of recognition, for which contemptuous treatment the Buck felt an insane desire to knock him down on the spot. But he dared not proceed to such a length, for he knew that Oonagh would never forgive him for raising a hostile hand to her father's gray head. And not Oonagh alone, but all the world would cry shame on him for it. So he had to content himself with keeping the peace, and nurse his wrath to keep it warm, until another and more convenient time.

Oonagh had heard something of this, but not all;

for her father never spoke of it, and what she did hear was the garbled accounts of people who had not even been present at "the scrimmage," but related it merely from hearsay. Since she had promised never to marry John Molloy without his consent, the old man had never alluded to the subject. She had given her promise, and he had full confidence in her truth and strong sense of duty, and saw no reason why he should worry either her or himself by keeping up unnecessary agitation. The matter had been settled in a satisfactory manner, and there was an end of it. He trusted that time and the course of events would open her eyes to the true character of "Pleasant" John, and show her how hollow and worthless he was, and what a broken reed she would lean on if she should be so miserably weak as to place her future happiness in his hands.

But if the day was ever to come when Oonagh's eyes were to be opened to the real nature of the man to whom she had plighted her troth, and whose broken sixpence rested night and day upon her breast, that day was yet very far distant. In the opinion of the innocent girl, whose life was so retired and lonely, whose knowledge of the world was so limited, he was everything that a lover or a husband should be.

The dearest wish of her heart was to see him

reconciled to her father, and to have the two beings she loved best on earth not only friends, but connected together by nearer and dearer ties than those of friendship alone. But this, she well knew, must be the work of time.

Meantime, she would be patient and hopeful, and try to stand between the two, as the peacemaker, pouring oil upon the troubled waves when she had the opportunity of doing so, and waiting with good courage for the happy time that was sure to come at last.

But through all, she was firmly resolved on keeping faith with both, and she could not see that there was anything incompatible in loving one, and fulfilling to the letter her duty to the other. She would be a good and dutiful daughter, and keep the promise she had made her father not to marry John without his consent, and she would be also faithful to the lover, to whom she had made another promise just as sacred. Both these promises had been freely given, and they should be strictly kept. It was a perilous position for a woman to be placed in, and one fraught with difficulty and embarrassment. But Oonagh was young, and to youth all things are possible, and the distant future is seen through a veil of the brightest and purest rose.

Alas! how many tears must be shed, how many sorrows endured, how many lonely, miserable hours must be spent, before the strong, sanguine heart of youth sinks down, all its bright hopes crushed and withered, and all its glorious illusions melted one by one into empty air!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORM BEGINS TO GATHER.

Oh! To what a reed
We bind our destinies when man we love!
BULWER LYTTON.

THE winter in which our story opened had been a very cold and inclement one, and the spring that had followed it was one of almost incessant rain. Even under the "dewy skies" of the Green Isle, it was considered to have been the latest and most ungenial spring that had been remembered for more than a decade of years. The rain fell not in showers, but in torrents, deluging the whole country, and turning the fertile low-lying lands into perfect swamps. Farming operations, except on high ground, were at a standstill, for seed would rot if put into earth so soaked with moisture, and though time went on, the dull gray sky overhead showed no sign of fair

weather. The farmers, after the fashion of their tribe, kept hoping on from day to day for some improvement in the weather on the approach of summer, and that though their crops would inevitably be very late, yet that they might be fairly good in the long run. But when the summer came at last it was not much to boast of, and though the seed had been sown as soon as it was practicable, yet the crops had never ripened properly for want of sufficient sunshine. Even hay —that should have thriven in so much moisture— was of very inferior quality, being rank and tough, coarse in fibre, and so sour that the cattle would not eat it but when hard pressed by hunger. The potatoes, upon which all classes—particularly the very poor—mainly depended for subsistence, were almost failures; for they never got dry in the ground, and were in consequence wet and soapy, as well as small in size. And, to complete the record of calamity, the sheep were dying in scores, of the rot, and of a disease called flukes in the liver, which is generated by feeding on excessively wet pasture.

In this melancholy state of affairs the estate of Mr. Dillon of Castle Cloyne had a full share, and Martin MacDermott fared no better than his neighbours in the general distress. His crops were very far below the average of other years, and his sheep

perished one by one in spite of all his care. While the wet weather continued there was scarcely a week that he did not bring home on his shoulders either a dead, or dying sheep. Those infected sheep were of course valueless, except for the skins, which sold for very little, as just then there was unhappily a glut of sheepskins in the market.

To make up for all these losses in some small way, the MacDermotts redoubled their exertions, and spared neither time, nor labour to keep things straight on the farm. The old man was out early and late, and in all weather; as far as it was in his power, leaving nothing to chance. His daughter did her very best to aid his efforts, and lighten his heavy burden. She never left the farm for the whole summer, but to go to mass on Sundays and holy days; she never thought of any variety or recreation, and never added even a shilling's-worth to her simple stock of clothes. It was rare to see so young a girl so wise and thoughtful; but Oonagh was no common girl, but one whose head and heart were both far in advance of her years.

When the 25th of March—usually called "Gale Day" in Ireland—came round, Martin was hard set to pay his half-year's rent. To put it together he had to sell his best milch cow, and also a good deal of the

hay that he required for his cattle during the rest of the spring. He was, however, more fortunate than most of his neighbours; some of them could only pay half their rent, while a great many could pay but a very small part of it. Mr. Dillon, the landlord, was not a hard man, and as he lived among his people, and was in a great degree his own agent, he knew well what a sea of troubles his poor tenants had to struggle against, and that it was not through any fault of their own that their payments were deficient. He was willing to make every reasonable allowance for them; partly through kindness, and partly because he knew that driving them to utter pauperism was not the best way to come by the arrears that remained due, as well as to ensure a more punctual settlement of accounts for the future.

As may be supposed, the loss of their best cow made a very serious difference to the MacDermotts. The supply of butter for the market was far short of what it used to be, to say nothing of the loss of the skimmed milk for the use of the family, and for rearing young cattle. It would be a long time before they could hope to have another cow so good, if indeed they would ever have her like again. But in one respect kind Nature has been bountiful to the Irish peasant; she has given

him an elastic spirit and a sanguine temperament. The cloud over his head must be very black and dense, through which he cannot see the silver lining that hangs behind it. He has, happily for himself, the faculty of working on against the greatest odds, and of hoping, even while there is hardly room for a hope to rest upon. The MacDermotts were no exception to this almost universal law. They were very thankful that in a season of such severe distress they were able to meet their landlord with the full amount of what they owed him, when so many of their neighbours were defaulters; thankful that they had another six months in which to take breath, and to strive by sheer hard work, and rigid self-denial, to provide against future casualties, and recover the ground that they had lost.

But though they worked hard, and contented themselves with such poor fare as barely sufficed to support life, yet a tide ran against them that not all their efforts could enable them to stem. Neither incessant toil, nor rigid self-denial, can be of much use to man when Nature herself turns against him; when the elements make war on him, and the ungrateful earth refuses to make any return for the time, and toil, that have been lavished on it. The summer was just as wet as the spring had been, and the prospect instead of brightening, became daily more gloomy and sad.

The old man's health broke down under the pressure of bodily labour, and mental anxiety, which of course added very considerably to their distress. He did not complain, and stoutly assured his daughter that he was quite well, but her watchful eyes detected in his appearance many signs of failing health, that one less affectionate, and less interested, might never see.

The summer—if a season wherein the sun never shone for five days out of the seven, could be called summer—was over, and Michaelmas Day, another Gale Day, came round again as inexorable as Fate. So far from having the full amount of his rent now, Martin had only a little more than half of it, and for the first time in his life he was behindhand. It was a great mortification to him, for not only was he very honest, but he was very proud, and his pride was humbled by being obliged to go to his landlord to beg for time, instead of being able to claim a receipt for the full amount of his half-year's rent. He had strained every nerve, and exhausted all his slender resources to make up the money, but without success. One of his heifers had been choked by a raw potato that she had managed to come by, but could not manage to swallow. That very heifer was to have been sold to make up the rent, and now they had nothing to get for her but the price of the hide.

There remained then nothing to sell but four pigs. Oonagh had always fattened up four pigs every summer, and took great pride in their size and quality; two of them were slaughtered at Christmas for the use of the house, and the other two were sold to purchase clothing for the ensuing year. But the luxury of a meat dinner occasionally, and of comfortable clothing, could not be thought of now, nor any other earthly thing but the inevitable rent. So the pigs were all sold, and the very next day the tax-collector came to demand payment of the county taxes, and the price of one of the pigs had to be handed over to him, for tax-gatherers, as a rule, are very peremptory persons. This reduced the sum that was intended for the rent very considerably, and when Michaelmas Day arrived—as it did all too soon—the farmer found that he had not the full amount of his rent.

It was a bad business, but there it was staring them in the face, and they could neither evade, nor ignore it. If trouble of mind, or bodily exertion could have been of any use, there was enough and to spare of both, but in this case all the effect they produced was to make the old man so ill, that he was fit for nothing but to go to his bed. In fact, the only thing that surprised his daughter was his having

been able to keep up so long. How glad she was now that nothing had induced her to desert him; that she had not left him in his old age to struggle on alone with the difficulties that were besetting him on every side, and which were as new and strange to him, as they were hard to bear! Continually she raised her heart in thanksgiving to her Heavenly Father, Who had by His grace enabled her to do her duty by her earthly one, and to try even in a small way to be a help and comfort to him.

On the morning before the dreaded Gale Day, the poor old man was very ill, and when Oonagh brought him his breakfast into his little bed-room, he refused to eat it.

"This is a nice egg that was laid this very mornin'; won't you plase me now by atin' it?" she said in her most coaxing way. "The tay is rale beautiful, for I got a little grain ov it good, a purpose for yourself."

He drank a little of the tea to gratify her, but could not eat anything.

"Child, this is a bad business," he said, sinking back on his pillow.

"It is a bad business, father, but sure it might be worse. Wid the help ov God, 'tis nothing but the grief, an' hard work, that's lanin' on your poor

heart, an' if wanst the rint was paid, you'd come on agin like a flagger."

"But we haven't the rint, Oonagh, an' to-morrow is Gale Day!"

"We haven't it all, surely, but the masther will take what we have from us, for he is a good man. That's well known ov him far an' near. An' sure he knows you to be an honest man that never was back before, an' wouldn't be now either, only for the times bein' so hard. An' my hand to you, when the masther sees how sick an' wake you are, he'll not think ov pressin' you."

"I won't be able to go up to the house to him wid the little I have, an' tell him my poor case. Avock! near as Castle Cloyne is to us, I'm in dhread that I could never walk so far."

"An' what need you go there, or as much as think ov it, an' me to the fore? I can run up to the big house in no time, an' do the best I can. I'll see Miss Grace, an' she'll put in a good word for me, never fear."

"It is the best thing that we can do," he said with a sigh. "Miss Grace has a feelin' heart, an' she never forgets that you are her own foster sister. 'Tis a fine thing surely to have a frind in coort. But listen hither to me, *alannah*, I don't like at all the thought

ov your going up to the big house to-morrow. The place will be full ov men ov every kind, an' I wouldn't like my little girl, to be elbowin' an' pushin' her way through 'em. Moreover, you'd have no time to spake to the masther, an' insince him into how it is that I haven't all my rint this Gale, an' that I'm so wake an' low, that I can't go wid it myself to him. You can go there to-day fair an' aisy, when no wan will be there at all, an' you won't be jostled about among a lot ov sthrange min. So in the name ov God, *asthore geál*, count out the money wanst more, to see if it is all right, an' then set off wid yourself."

"Yes, father, as soon as I help Molly wid the dairy."

"No, child, you must go at wanst. 'Tis aisy to look after the dairy now, *foreer!** an' Molly can do it to-day without you. I'm onaisy till I hear what the masther'll say to me about bein' back wid him. But he's a good man, an' knows well that I'd pay to the last farthing if I had it, an' Miss Grace will be sure to give you a lift over the stile, for your mother's sake that nursed her at her breast. An' Oonagh, I'd like you'd go airly, so that you could tell your story plain an' square to the both ov 'em."

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* *Foreer!*—Alas!

As soon as she had removed the almost untasted food from her father's room, and eaten her own frugal breakfast, Oonagh proceeded to obey his instructions with as little delay as possible. She made her simple toilet, which was easily done, for her wardrobe, never very abundant, had lately shrunk to very small proportions, for clothes *will* look shabby and wear out, when not supplemented by fresh additions. But clothes must be very bad indeed that will not look tolerably well when they are whole and neat, and set off by a good figure, and handsome face. And as Oonagh cast a parting glance at the little glass that hung on a nail near her bed, she was well aware that she made a fair and attractive picture, for the girl was neither blind nor a fool!

It was a very fine morning when Oonagh set out to walk to Castle Cloyne, which was about two miles from her father's house. There had been a slight frost on the previous night, just enough to freshen the air, and send a brighter colour into her cheeks than they had worn for some time past. The birds were pouring forth their sweetest music from every hedge and bush, and the sun, that had been such a stranger for the spring, and summer, now shed down its brightest beams as if to make some tardy amends for its previous defalcations. The meadows along

the road looked fresh, and green, in their rich aftermath. The bramble-bushes on either side were covered with clusters of ripe, juicy blackberries, that were very tempting-looking, and Oonagh was yet young enough to cast longing eyes on them. At another time she would have stopped to gather some, but she knew she had no time for that to-day, so she hurried on.

It was a delicious day, the first of what is called the Indian summer, and the heart of the poor harassed girl grew light, and hopeful, under its gracious influence.

She had gone about a mile when she was overtaken by Thady, the *omadhawn*, who was on one of his rounds, and as their way was the same they walked on together.

"An' where are you goin' wid yourself now, Oonagh, if a body might ax?" after they had exchanged greetings; for, like all persons of weak intellect, he was inordinately curious about everyone's affairs, and was in consequence the general newsmonger of the whole parish of Castle Cloyne.

"Up to the big house, to see Miss Grace."

"An' have you nary other bisness?"

"I have a message from my father to the masther?"

"I suppose he's sindin' you wid his Gale's rint? Faix, Oonagh, 'tis well to be you. There's many a wan ov the Castle Cloyne tinants, that hasn't your story to tell this fine mornin'. Many a wan ov 'em will be back this Gale, if what we hear be thrue."

She made no answer to this, as she did not choose to enlighten him on the state of her father's affairs, nor give him an opportunity of retailing them in the next house he went to.

"Eyeh! did you hear the great news?" he exclaimed suddenly. "The wondherfullest news that you h'ard this month ov Sundays."

"No, Thady, I did not."

"You didn't, eroo! Faix, that flogs cockfightin', so it does. Sure, I thought that every mother's son in the whole parish h'ard it."

"I wasn't out for some time, barrin' to airly mass on Sundays; for my father isn't well in himself, an' so I had more to do than I had before. But, Thady, what's your wondherful news?"

"Well, 'tis that Michael Molloy got a sudden death ere istherday—God bless the hearers, an' the place we tell it in."

"Michael Molloy got a sudden death?" she repeated, as if trying to comprehend what he said.

"Don't you know him, Oonagh? He's the brother ov Shawn Sugagh, the fine, handsome, rollickin' boy, that spakes such grand English intirely, an' that the people calls 'Buck Molloy,' be way ov a nick-name."

"I do know him, Thady; why wouldn't I? An' is John Molloy's brother dead?"

"Sure, I seen him dead an' laid out, for I was all night at the wake. He wint to the fair ere istherday, an' people say he took a dhrop too much. He fell out ov the cart, anyhow, on his way home; an' airly next mornin' he was found dead—the Lord save us!—wid the cart turned upside down in top ov him. The mare got loose from the tacklin' some-how, an' she was atin' the grass be the side ov the road, as fair an' aisy as if nothing at all happened to poor Michael. He was a dacent man, poor Michael, but he was a thrifle too fond ov the licker. If he'd only lave the whisky alone, an' come away from the fair place wid his seven senses about him, he wouldn't be a box ov cold mate to-day. People do be sayin' that he was matchmakin' in the Widda Casey's tint an' took more licker on the head ov it than was good for him."

"For who was he matchmakin', Thady? Which was it for, himself or his brother?"

"Yarra, how div I know? sure 'tis all aiquil which ov 'em it was. Sure they wor both ov 'em at it ever an' always; it would be Michael to-day, an' it would be John to-morra. There wasn't a girl in the whole country wid the name ov a little money that wan or other ov 'em wasn't afther. An' so 'tis to pay the Gale's rint that you are goin' up to the big house?"

The girl was so much absorbed by her own thoughts that she made no reply to this question, and the simpleton, careless whether she did or not, went rambling on after his own peculiar fashion.

"Begor, if the Buck was pleasant before, 'tis three times pleasanter he'll be from this out. Fake an' sure 'tis now he be Shawn Sugagh in rale airnest. What rocks ov fine English he'll have now! The priest ov the parish will hardly bate him for big words, an' grandeur. If his English was tall before, 'twill be a dale taller now that he has the house an' farm all to himself. Blood alive! 'tis now all the girls will be pullin' caps for the same boy, anyway all the rich girls, for he won't look at any wan else. If he was hard to be plased before, he'll be tin times harder now."

"An' was he hard to be plased?"

"Alliloo! 'Tis himself that was. There isn't a boy in Castle Cloyne thinks more ov himself than Shawn Sugagh, an' b'lieve me he won't let himself go

chape. When next he goes matchmakin', 'tis blood, bone, an' beauty he must get. The dickens a less will satisfy him."

"An' does he often go matchmakin'?"

"You may say he does, an' tell no lie in it. Sure 'tisn't more than three months ago—maybe 'twas at last Shrove, but my memory isn't very good—he was matchmakin', an' was widin that ov bein' married"—snapping his fingers. "But he differed wid the girl's father on the head ov a nice little Kerry cow that he had a great fancy for, but the ould man wouldn't give it, and said he was givin' his daughter quite enough without throwin' in the Kerry along wid the rest. The Buck and his brother wor so vexed that they riz out ov the match intirely, an' the girl was married that day week to Tom Scales. Ov coorse you hard ov her, Oonagh? She was a girl ov the Ryans, an' a nate purty girl too, be the same token. She often ga' me a shirt when I was in black want ov it. But you're not mindin' me, Oonagh."

"Fake an' sure I am."

"Listen hether to me now. The best thing you can do is to cock your cap at John Molloy, an' give us wan pleasant night at your weddin'. 'Tis long since there was any divarshun in the parish, an' 'tis what the people says that they have something

else to trouble 'em now besides divarshun. God be wid the good ould times, Oonagh, *'a colleen dhass*, when there was full and plinty in every house, an' no talks at all ov poverty an' bad crops!" Evidently the poor fool's welcome was not at all what it once was in the houses where he took up his quarters on going his rounds.

By this time they had reached a part of the road that branched off in two parts, one running off to the nearest town, and the other leading to the house and demesne of Castle Cloyne. Oonagh was by no means sorry to part company with the fool, for she was weary of his talk. He was sometimes amusing enough, and with all his folly had a certain amount of cunning and shrewdness, but just now he was too much for her. She longed to be alone for a short time, to collect her thoughts, and think over what she had just heard.

She did not believe a word of the story that her lover had been matchmaking with "the girl of the Ryans," or any other girl. She would as soon doubt of her existence, as doubt his faith, and loyalty. Whatever he might have done before the "hand-fasting," that ceremony bound him so firmly to her that in honour he could not think of any other woman until she had formally released him from

his engagement. Now that he had got means sufficient to satisfy her father, he would come forward once more and renew his proposals. He would settle down now that he had business to attend to, and become sensible and industrious, and all that her fond heart had ever imagined him to be. And as Oonagh with the hopeful credulity of a loving woman thought of all this, and pictured the happy future that was before her, her eye grew brighter and her step more buoyant. Her mind was more at ease than it had been for many a long day, and she could almost have sung out loud in the fulness of her joy. It was not that she was glad because a neighbour, and one she had known all her life, had met with a sudden and awful death, and had been hurried into the presence of his Maker, while unprepared and probably in a state of sin. Oonagh had a tender and pitiful heart, and would be sorry if a lesser evil than sudden death had befallen anyone she knew. But now the great importance of this event, and the great influence it must exercise on the future of her lover and herself, made her harder and more indifferent than she would be at another time. She was young, human, and in love! What more can I say? That must excuse her fault.

In this happy and sanguine mood she turned aside from the main road, and entered on a narrow footpath that led on to the back entrance of Castle Cloyne.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DILLON FAMILY.

Not long our air they breathed,
Not long they fed on venison, in Irish water seethed,
Not often had their children been by Irish mothers nursed,
When from their full and flowing hearts the genial feeling burst.

THOMAS DAVIS.

THE Dillons of Castle Cloyne were descended from a very old Anglo-Norman stock that had been settled in Ireland for several centuries—so long a time, indeed, that it had sufficed to obliterate all traces of their foreign origin, to identify them completely with their adopted country, and to make them in all respects "more Irish than the Irish themselves." They brought Irish wives to their homes, were served by Irish servants with dog-like fidelity, and each successive generation of them grew up more intensely Irish than that which had gone before.

In ancient times the Dillons were people of much importance, and held a foremost place among the gentry of the country. Their possessions were ample, and their right to them indisputable. The world went well with them, and they went just as well with the world; for it was characteristic of the Dillons that they never made an enemy, and never lost a friend. This was not because they did not know how to take their own part, and bear themselves under all circumstances as men and gentlemen should do, for they were brave almost to rashness, and whenever hard knocks were plentiful they always came well to the front. Even if they won nothing else from their opponents, they won respect and admiration; and though they most frequently took part with the losing side, neither the purity of their motives, nor their gallant spirit, could ever be called in question.

But what had made them so popular with all classes was their overflowing good-nature, their lavish hospitality, and a geniality of manner that placed completely at their ease all with whom they came into contact.

They had their faults, no doubt, those Dillons—for who is faultless?—but no one cared to drag them into undue prominence when there was in the

scale at the other side, so much that was good, and noble, to counterbalance them. So they lived, and loved, and enjoyed their lives to the full, and no one envied or hated them, or grudged them their wealth or popularity, or ever spoke of them but with kindness and good will.

But the Reformation brought a change to the Dillons, for as they remained faithful to the creed of their fathers they had to pay the penalty for their fidelity that was invariably exacted in Ireland. When the old faith went down, the prestige and prosperity of those who adhered to it went down with it. They lived henceforth under a cloud that no ray of sunshine was ever allowed to pierce. They were frowned upon by the ruling powers, excluded from every office of trust and emolument, and treated in the land of their birth as an outcast and alien race.

But the Dillons had a high spirit, and that happy elasticity of disposition peculiar to Irishmen, and given by a kind Providence in compensation for innumerable misfortunes and sorrows. These two grand gifts stood well to them in the hour of need, and kept their heads above water when many others of their co-religionists were swept away. They struggled manfully against the terrible oppres-

sion of the penal laws, and though they were always sufferers and losers to a great extent, yet it was always under loud protest, and after fighting for every inch of ground. As the ages went on the waters became more troubled, and the suffering borne for conscience' sake was made more grievous still. Many a gallant vessel went down after a long and bitter struggle in the breakers of those evil times, and those that did not had desperate work to keep afloat.

In 1689, when a few hastily levied, and undisciplined Irish regiments, had the chivalry or the Quixotism—it can be called by either name—to oppose themselves to six times their own number of the best-trained, and seasoned troops in Europe, there was not wanting one of the Dillons to fling himself into the arena. Theobald Dillon raised a regiment for the service of King James, for they were unlucky enough to espouse the losing side in politics, as well as in religion. This fine regiment, destined to become famous in many a hard-fought field, consisted originally of the tenants, and adherents of the family, and was called, *par excellence*, "Dillon's Regiment of Horse." This celebrated regiment distinguished itself splendidly at the Boyne, at Aughrim, and in the defence of Limerick. This sturdy Theobald survived

the disastrous Irish campaign, was outlawed, and with the skeleton of his regiment had to fly to France. Arthur Dillon, the son of Theobald, was another gallant soldier, who rose in the French service to the rank of *Maréchal de Camp*, and for bravery in the field was made lieutenant-general. Another of this fighting family commanded "Dillon's" at Fontenoy. When the order to charge was given to the Irish Brigade at the close of the day, James Dillon rose in his stirrups, looked round him for an instant, and then shouting, "Irishmen, remember Limerick!" dashed forward, closely followed by his men, all echoing his cry. He was killed in that famous charge. His brother Edward, who rode at his right hand, assumed the command at once, and well did he, and the regiment he led, avenge that day the death of their gallant leader. "Dillon's" was never commanded by anyone but a Dillon, and the last of those famous colonels, another Arthur, was guillotined at the French Revolution, along with many another great and noble man.

Another of the family was an officer of "Dillon's" at the rescue of Cremona; but this man was not a Theobald, or a James, but a Hyacinth. He stood with his men at the gates in their shirts—for they were roused to fight the cuirassiers of Count Merci

while they were sleeping in their beds—and though their loss was very great, yet they stood at last in the gateway victorious, and naked, in the gloom of that cold January morning. Their Colonel, Hyacinth Dillon, was desperately wounded, but he recovered, only to die in battle harness on another battle-field, as many a Dillon had died before him. There was scarcely a battle-ground in Europe where those Irish exiles of every name, and rank, did not prove their prowess, and shed their blood, for a cause that was not their own, and for monarchs to whom they owned no allegiance. But those monarchs had given them shelter, and pay, when they were outcasts from their own land. They had been forced by imperious necessity to become soldiers of fortune, and to give to foreign countries the energies, the blood, the lives, that they would gladly have devoted to their own. It was a most melancholy fate, that of those unfortunate Irish gentlemen who had suffered so much, and so severely for conscience' sake. They had no home but the camp, no property but their good swords, and nothing to look forward to, but a soldier's death, and a grave in alien soil. Yet those poor gentlemen always bore themselves well, and bravely, and without reproach. There is not a Catholic country in Europe in whose annals their services are not recorded, and

many of the first families in those countries bear the names, and are proud of their descent from the soldiers of the celebrated Irish Brigade.

Although the Dillons who had remained at home had no opportunities of distinguishing themselves, and were consequently unknown, and unheard-of beyond their own district, they had nevertheless their full share of struggles, and reverses. The grinding despotism of the cruel penal laws pressed on them with iron force, such as they found it impossible either to escape, or evade. Little by little, their property was wrested from them by fines, and confiscations for their religious recusancy, but they only clung all the more to their proscribed faith—partly from pride, if the truth must be told, and partly from sincere belief. The faith for which many Dillons died at the Boyne, and many more at Fontenoy, could not, they felt, be sold for a mess of pottage, or the delights of the flesh-pots of Egypt. As long as they could, they resisted the cruel laws that were so hard, and grievous, and when they could not resist, they tried to evade them.

There was one of the family, another Hyacinth, who was celebrated for the fine horses that were always in his stable, and which set any of his neighbours that had equine proclivities half mad with

envy. He was one day eating his dinner at the public table of the hotel in the county town, during the week of the assizes. While he was still at dinner, his carriage, drawn by four magnificent bay horses, drew up in the street just under the window of the hotel. When he had dined, and was calling to the waiter for his bill, an acquaintance of his entered the room and addressed him:

"Dillon, that is a fine team of yours. I should like very much to be their owner."

"I don't intend to sell them," replied Hyacinth Dillon. "I bred those cattle for my own use, and as they suit me I don't mean to sell them."

"They are mine for all that. You know that by law a Papist is not allowed to have a horse worth more than five pounds," and with a smile of audacious triumph the *gentleman* (*!*) laid four five-pound notes down on the table before the astonished Dillon.

"Why, they are worth fifty pounds each at the lowest calculation, and to me, who bred them, a great deal more. I cannot, and will not sell them," he cried indignantly.

"But, my good fellow, don't you see that the law is against you? There is the legal price of the horses, and you have no option but to accept it. The team is mine, you understand."

Hyacinth Dillon ground his teeth in impotent rage, for he knew well what the law on the matter was, and also that he was utterly without remedy. He was a "Papist," and any Protestant, who chose to offer him five pounds each for his horses, had the power to take them from his carriage, and lead them away before his face.

"Might is right in these days," he said, with darkening brow, and an eye that flashed fire, "so I suppose I have no choice but to submit. But though I must give you my team of horses for less than half the price of one of them, I know no law that compels me to give you my carriage, or harness, for what you may choose to offer for them. I must step down, if you please, and give directions to my servants about them."

He left the room, and ran down the stairs in a state of excitement that bordered on distraction. In another moment four pistol-shots were heard in rapid succession. He had killed his splendid horses, sooner than surrender them to the man who had taken advantage of a tyrannical law to possess himself of them!

A cry of anger and indignation broke from all the gentlemen in the room who had seen, and heard the whole of this disgraceful transaction. The Pro-

testants were quite as much disgusted as the Catholics, for they were all gentlemen, and men of honour in the room, and they gave expression to their indignation in no measured terms. Cries of "Shame," "disgraceful," "infamous," "kick him out," resounded on every side, and things began to look so threatening, that the mean wretch who had drawn so much obloquy on himself, slunk out of the house, ashamed, and crestfallen. He had lost the fine horses that he coveted so much, and he lost what was of far more value, his good name, and the respect of his fellow-men.

But Hyacinth Dillon had too high a spirit to allow himself to be extinguished. He continued to drive his carriage as usual, but instead of horses, it was drawn by four *bullocks!* The law did not authorise anyone to take *them* out of the traces, and make them his own by offering to the recusant possessor a merely nominal price for them. He had always been popular, like all the Dillons, but his conduct on this occasion had made him a perfect hero in the eyes of the people. He was applauded to the skies by all classes and sects of his excitable countrymen, by whom a bold, and spirited action is always appreciated, while the man who had behaved in a way so contrary to all their ideas of what was manly, and gentlemanly, became the

object of universal scorn and contempt. To the end of his life Hyacinth Dillon's carriage was always drawn by four bullocks, and he and his family occupied it with as much ease, and self-possession, as if it were the splendid bays of the old time that champed and curvetted out before them.*

Mr. Dominic Dillon, the present owner of the Castle Cloyne estate, was descended from a younger branch of this fine old family. The lineal representative and head of the house had long since conformed to the established religion, had recovered a good deal of the forfeited property, and in some way had entitled himself to a peerage. But the younger branch had not changed their creed when they had diverged from the parent stem, and consequently had been obliged to live in comparative obscurity, and to stand aside while the honours of the world, and the pleasures of society, were enjoyed by people vastly their inferiors in birth and fortune. But for this mortifying state of things there was no remedy, and they had to endure it with as much philosophy as they could call to their aid. In the course of time the severity of the penal

* This anecdote, exactly as it is set down in the text, is related of one of the Geoghegans of Westmeath. Numbers of the Irish Catholic gentry had their carriages drawn by bullocks during the time of the penal laws: the Wises of Waterford among the rest.

laws was gradually mitigated, and by the Emancipation act of 1829 the last remnant of them had been swept away altogether. But those wicked and cruel penal laws had done their own work on many an old family; driven their children away to foreign lands for education and subsistence, and made paupers of those that had remained at home. The fine estates that had been in possession of the same families for centuries, were so swamped by fine and confiscation that they had in most instances passed away into other hands, and nothing remained of the original owners but the vague, tender tradition, that lingered in the hearts of the peasantry.

But the Dillons of Castle Cloyne were not altogether in such evil case as this. They contrived to keep their property even in the worst times, chiefly with the help of some kind Protestant friends, who from time to time had filed bills of discovery against them, and by that form of law becoming the real owners of their estates. This ownership was merely a nominal one, and intended to cover and protect the rights of the true possessors. By this means the Dillons were enabled to keep their property, and enjoyed the respect and consideration that is invariably shown in Ireland to people who are well descended, or as it is expressed, "are come of an ould stock."

Their lands were heavily mortgaged, but they bore that with as much equanimity as their neighbours who were similarly circumstanced. If their means of enjoyment were on a limited scale, they made up for that by taking all the pleasure out of them that they could be made to yield. Each of them seemed as if he had said to himself, "Castle Cloyne will last my time" and acted accordingly, for he rode and hunted, and made love, and enjoyed life in an easy, careless sort of way; and dying regretted by all who knew him was succeeded by his son, or his nephew, as the case might be, who as a matter of course was as easy-going and pleasure-loving as all the rest of them. In the mean time debts were incurred, and had multiplied so fast that at the time when this story opens, the property was mortgaged to its full value, and Mr. Dillon was less the owner, than the steward thereof. It was a bad state of things, but by no means uncommon in Ireland, until the strong hand of the Encumbered Estates Court ruthlessly swept away all old landmarks, crushed out many old families, and razed to the ground many a happy and time-honoured home.

The present owner of Castle Cloyne had always been one of the most popular men in his native county. When young he was noted for having a proud, high spirit like all his race, but which in

him was tempered by great good-nature, and a manner that combined dignity and self-respect, with cordiality and courtesy. He lost none of this popularity when on his father's death he became the head of the family, for he was generous, genial, and remarkable for his hospitality, even among a people with whom hospitality is considered a duty, and a failure in it not only a meanness, but a crime. But this very popularity became his ruin. Many of his associates were persons who, though not better born, were more largely endowed with worldly wealth than he was himself, and to keep up with them, and meet them on equal terms, made him contract debts that were not always necessary, and which contributed little by little, to swell the incumbrances on a property so heavily weighted as his was. He had the hereditary love of his family for good horses, and as the evil times when he could not have legally one of greater value than five pounds were happily passed away, he indulged himself in this expensive luxury until his stables, and the animals they contained, were the objects of general admiration. His grooms and trainers cost him a good round sum at the end of the year, when all was told. He kept a small but good pack of hounds, and his kennel was on a par with his stables, as far as care and money could make

it so. Nor was a faultless stable, and kennel, the only extravagance that his love of horses, and dogs, had entailed on this impoverished Irish gentleman. When "the meet" happened to be in his neighbourhood, there was of course a handsome breakfast, or luncheon at Castle Cloyne for all who chose to partake of them, besides numerous dinner-parties, at which no small amount of port wine, claret, and whiskey punch was consumed by Mr. Dillon's jovial guests. All this cost money, which was seldom paid, but saddled on the property, to be paid at some future time, and by some indefinite means, that no one could foresee or understand. But the climax was put on the family embarrassments, when Mr. Dillon "contested the county" with one who, though not so well born, or so popular, was better provided with "the sinews of war." As an almost inevitable consequence he was signally defeated. When the money was brought into play, the good blood, and the popularity were nowhere, and when the election resulted in his discomfiture, Mr. Dillon returned to his home a sadder if not a wiser man. His estate had been burdened with an additional debt, and he had the mortification of knowing that he was beaten on his own ground, and in his native county, by a man whose father had been

an English soap-boiler, and whose grandfather—if he ever had had a grandfather—had never been even heard of in Castle Cloyne!

But all this had happened in times past, when Mr. Dillon had been a young man. Now he was far advanced in life, and a martyr to those periodical attacks of gout, that are the certain legacies that good living, and port wine leave behind them. The jovial dinners, and the good wine had done their work thoroughly, and now the greater part of his life was spent either in bed, or in his arm-chair. But though the gout had done much to cripple, and make him a prisoner, yet it could not take away the cheerfulness, the cordiality, the easy *insouciance* that were like second nature to Dominic Dillon. Though contending with pecuniary difficulties and much bodily pain, yet in his old age he had the same natural, spontaneous gaiety, and the same superb indifference about money matters, with which he had entered upon manhood. He took all things easy, his creditors included; and they returned him the compliment, for they rarely annoyed him about their money, or pressed him for payment of it, being apparently quite content with the high interest that was paid to them with tolerable punctuality.

A different train of thought, and a different course of action, might have made Dominic Dillon a different man; more prosperous, more wealthy, and, it may be, more churlish and niggardly; but it would not have made him happier, or more beloved.

CHAPTER X.

THE DILLONS AT HOME.

Nous regardons les mœurs de ce peuple comme une belle fable, et il doit regarder les nôtres comme un songe monstrueux.

FÉNÉLON.

DOMINIC DILLON had married early in life, and after a few brief years of wedded happiness, had been left a widower with two children. He contracted no second marriage, but remained faithful to the memory of the fair young wife so dearly loved, and early lost. He was in the flower of his manhood when she was taken from him; but from that hour his heart was closed against the love of woman, and all the affections of his kind, and genial nature were reserved for the children she had left behind her.

The elder of these children, Hyacinth, was the pride and glory of his father's heart. At this time

he was scarcely more than a boy, having only attained his majority, but one whose bright face, and superb physique, gave promise of developing into a perfect specimen of handsome, and vigorous manhood. He had been well educated; but like most young men brought up in the country, his tastes and recreations lay more in field sports, and manly occupations out of doors, than in the refined pleasures that arise from the cultivation of the intellectual faculties.

He was a good horseman, inheriting all the family love for the equine race, which cost his father a good round sum every year, but Mr. Dillon could not find fault with a passion in his son, that he possessed himself in no small degree. In truth, he could not bring himself to find fault with the lad, let him do what he would. Hyacinth was a true Dillon, or, as the people used to say, "a chip of the old block," and never troubled himself as to how, or where, the money he required was got, so long as it was forthcoming when he wanted it. He enjoyed his life immensely after his own fashion; was always one of the stewards at the county races, and the steeplechases, that came off occasionally, and not unfrequently rode one of his own horses—when the stakes were competed for by gentlemen—bringing him in triumph up to the winning

post. To his own natural advantages he added all his father's good-nature, and courtesy of manner. He would ride a steeplechase over a very stiff course just as readily as he would go to a ball, being neck-and-neck with the men in the first, and ready for any amount of flirtation with the women in the second. It is not surprising, then, that he was as popular with one sex as with the other, and not more so with his own class, than with the peasantry, who never spoke of him but with affectionate respect, for the heart of the Irish peasant always goes out to a handsome person, and a gallant, daring spirit. When they spoke of their landlord's son, it was in language as enthusiastic as it was sincere. It was invariably, "Masther Hy'cinth is his father's own son," or, "He's a rale Dillon, every inch ov him," or it would be, "Masther Hy'cinth has a fine sperrit, an' an open hand, an' he didn't stale either ov 'em, but got 'em from every father that ever came before him."

Mr. Dillon's second child was a daughter, but unlike his son, for she was not handsome, and slightly deformed. She was small in person, and though not actually in ill health, yet she lacked the robust appearance, and faultless physique, that were so conspicuous in her brother. She shared with him, however, the good disposition, and the pleasant, gracious manner

that was so eminently one of the family characteristics. Her want of personal beauty had made her sensitive and thoughtful beyond her years, and though she had a full share of the Dillon pride, yet it did not manifest itself after the fashion of the Dillons. She abhorred debt, and considered that all the shifts, and schemes, and subterfuges that inevitably accompany debt were unworthy of respectable people, and should be held by them to be mean and disgraceful. When she came home from the Parisian convent in which she had been educated, and was placed by her father at the head of his establishment, she became acquainted with a state of things for which her life in the peaceful cloister had in no way prepared her. She came home, to be sure, at a most awkward time, for it was just after her father had "stood for the county" and been signally defeated, greatly to his own surprise and that of his friends. After that, the expenses of the fruitless contest had to be faced. Day after day the "greetings" of "Our Sovereign Lady the Queen" in the form of writs and latitats were out against him, and it took some time before his affairs were arranged, which was done by paying the small sums in cash, and the large ones by additional mortgages on his estate. In the interim Mr. Dillon had to be "on his keeping," for the bailiffs were lying in wait to arrest him, and

prowling round the demesne, the gates of which were locked by day as well as by night. The house was strictly barricaded, except on Sundays, when arrest was not legal; strong chains were thrown across all the doors on the ground floor, and the windows all nailed down. It might have been imagined that the house was in a state of siege, only that the words of the poet were reversed, for here the foe did not come in battalions, but in single spies.

It was at this singularly unpropitious time that Mr. Dillon brought home his daughter from her French convent, after an absence of ten years, wholly unprepared for this strange state of things, and incapable for a long time of realising it. She was shocked to find that her father's house was beset by bailiffs, and guarded like a jail; and that, so far from being either ashamed or unhappy, he seemed to look upon it as only a temporary inconvenience; but which, to the proud, sensitive girl, looked very much like want of principle, and even common honesty. In a little time, however, all the debts consequent on the election were settled somehow; the doors of Castle Cloyne were no longer shut with the chain thrown across them. Mr. Dillon was no longer "a Sunday man," but free to come and go without fear of having a writ thrust into his hand

as he went along. He was very soon as jovial as ever, made merry with his numerous friends, and with them had a great many amusing anecdotes of the election to talk over and laugh at.

This was all great fun to Hyacinth, who enjoyed it immensely. The angles of his pride had been blunted long since by an acquaintance with debt and its attendant satellites, bailiffs and process-servers; and this of late years had become so frequent as to be almost a matter of course. But it was far otherwise with Grace, whose first experience of life had been so very galling and humiliating. A little of this experience had sufficed to turn the happy, light-hearted girl into a grave and silent woman; accepting the responsibilities that devolved on her as mistress of such an establishment as her father's house with a feeling that was almost sorrow, but determined to fulfil them in a true, conscientious spirit. She could not hope to undo what had been done, but she would try to wake some sort of respectability and order out of the chaos that had hitherto reigned supreme. It was a gigantic task she had set herself, and one that would have made an older woman shrink back in dismay; but Grace Dillon had a brave, patient heart enclosed in her frail body, as well as a share of the large fund of self-

denial, and endurance, with which some women are endowed, and which is often the only dower that the poor souls are gifted with. Her father and brother were much amused by her attempts at retrenchment, and economy, but they were also glad; not that they imagined for a moment that any effort of hers could effect any solid or lasting improvement in the state of affairs at Castle Cloyne, for they knew well that the evils she sought to grapple with, were too widely spread, and of too old a date to be dealt with successfully by a young, inexperienced girl; but as it took up her attention, and afforded her pleasure to think she could be of use, they let her have her own way in some very minor details that belonged to her own province as mistress of the house. It was very disheartening work, but she persevered, and in her own small way effected a little revolution. The house that since her mother's death had been the theatre of reckless extravagance, and untidy waste, began under her gentle, but firm management to show some appearance of being a *home*, and a home, too, that was presided over by a *lady*. The chaos soon gave way to order, and the wasteful expenditure to a system of economy that was careful, and prudent, without degenerating into meanness. But this beneficent change was only in her own peculiar domain, indoors.

There was no improvement outside the house, either in the stable, or the kennel; and with regard to the lavish expenditure in those departments, she could only look on in silent vexation, wondering where, and how it was all to end.

At this time Mr. Dillon was slowly recovering from one of his usual attacks of gout. He sat in his easy chair, with the gouty foot wrapped up in flannels, and resting on a soft cushion. On one side was a table, on which lay an open writing-desk at which he was making up accounts, for he employed no agent, but transacted all his business with his tenants himself. This was one of the many reasons why he was so popular with them, because it brought him face to face with them, to arrange their affairs, and settle their differences, without the intervention of any third party. It was said that this arrangement was a very bad one for himself, and that his finances would be in a more flourishing condition, if a paid agent, who would stand no nonsense, had the management of the estate. Mr. Dillon's plan did not work well on the whole, but he said he would not have anyone going between him and his people, and that as he knew them, and they knew him, things would be sure to come right in the end.

The room in which he sat was the dining-room,

and it would have looked bare and comfortless only that a large fire blazed in the grate, shedding warmth and brightness around it. It was a large, lofty room that had no doubt looked well once on a time, when the paint was fresh, and the furniture new; but that had been a very distant time indeed, so distant that the date was altogether lost. Now the paint on the doors and windows was so defaced, that it would be hard to tell what might have been its original colour, and the carpets and hangings, that had once been handsome and bright, were faded to one uniform dingy hue. The furniture when bought had been the best of its kind; all of the best Honduras mahogany, solid, substantial, and almost black from age. There was no veneering in the dining-room of Castle Cloyne —everything in it, though ponderous, and old-fashioned, was still real and true.

Miss Dillon sat opposite to her father at the other side of the fire, engaged in some needlework, but quite silent, lest she should distract his thoughts from the accounts he was wading through, apparently with no small trouble. Though not handsome, her face was very pleasing, with a refined, patrician expression stamped upon it; an expression that is born of education, and a habitual dwelling on pure and ennobling thoughts.

She wore a very simple dress of dark merino, but though it was not expensive it fitted her to perfection, and a collar and cuffs of plain linen relieved by their freshness, and whiteness, the sombreness of the dress. She wore no ornaments but a watch and chain, that had been her mother's.

While Mr. Dillon was going down a most formidable-looking column of figures, with his forefinger pointing slowly at them, a servant entered the room, and laid a scrap of dirty-looking paper on the table before his master.

"What is it, Pat?" asked Mr. Dillon, looking up pen in hand.

"Av you plase, sir, Andy Mulhall the farrier is in the kitchen below, an' he sint me up to you wid this little bill. He says he can sit be the fire until 'tis your honour's convanience to sind down the money."

"Very well, Pat; when I look over his bill, I will ring the bell for you to come up again."

The servant—a good-looking young fellow who had been in the family since his childhood, and in consequence felt himself quite one of the family—still lingered by the table. After a moment he said:

"If it isn't convanient to you, sir, to pay this

money, I can give Andy a glass ov sperrits, an' pack him off. I'll go bail he can do without it for another start. Sure, the tinants didn't pay yourself, at all, till to-morrow."

"Well, now that you mention it, I think Andy *might* have waited until I was paid myself."

"Faix, then, so I told him, but what's the use? You can't get anything out ov a pig but grunts. I'd as soon be breakin' stones for a paviour, as thryin' to knock a little dacency into a gilloat like him."

"Well, I'll just look over his bill; the amount can't be a great deal, for I paid him another bill not long since. I suppose 'tis all right," and he took up the scrap of dirty paper, written all over in an illegible schoolboy hand.

"'Be attindin' the bay mare when she was sick wid glandhers, wan pound.

"'Be givin' her two dhraffs, two an' sixpence.

"'Be curin' the black cow that died, tin shillin's.

"'Be cuttin' a pup's tail an' airs, wan shillin'.'"

"I'll tell him to come in a few days, sir, when you have more time to attind to him," said Pat.

"The poor man may want his money," suggested

Miss Dillon. "He lives at a great distance, and loses a whole day whenever he comes here. If you have the money, papa, don't you think it would be better to pay him, and let him go home?"

"Oh, hang the fellow! But you are right, Grace, it is better be done with him at once. Here is his money."

Pat took the money and vanished, but before many minutes he was back again.

"Av you plase, sir, Tom Delahunty is below for the price ov the pup."

"What pup?"

"The pup he brought from County Limerick for Masther Hy'cinth, an' a very nate pup he is too, an' will make a grand sportin' dog intirely in the coorse ov a little time, when the thrainer is done wid him."

"My son is not here now, and I know nothing about it. Tell him to come when Master Hyacinth is at home."

"I as good as said them very words to him, your honour, but he says he's in great disthress, an' the wife lyin' down in the sickness wid him. I wouldn't put it past him to tell a lie on the head ov it; still an' all, the faver is very bad near his place, an' what he says may be thrue, though betune you an' me an' the wall, I don't b'lieve a word ov it."

"But it might be true, and if so, he wants money for his sick wife. I wouldn't like to refuse him for her sake. How much is it?"

"He says the price of the pup is two guineas, but he'll only ax Masther Hy'cinth the two pounds. Erra! I wouldn't give the ashes out ov my pipe for what he says!"

"Two pounds is a great sum to give for a pup."

"Begor it is, sir, there's no denyin' it. But sure if Masther Hy'cinth thinks he's worth it, 'tis all aiqual."

"Well, here is thirty shillings, let him settle with my son about the rest. Now, Pat Flanagan, be off, and bring me no more dunning messages, for this day at all events."

"Fake an' sure, I won't if I can help it. The soles ov my shoes is fairly wore out runnin' back an' forrid, attindin' all the mornin' on every shooler ov 'em."

"And, Pat."

"Iss, sir."

"Tell my son not to go out until I see him."

"You just spoke in time, for I hard him tellin' Tony Whigarald to bring his horse round to the hall door," and Pat ran off to tell Hyacinth that his father wished to speak to him.

Hyacinth, who was going off to the hunt, came in to the dining-room when he got the message. As he stood by the old gentleman's chair, he was as fine a specimen of youthful manhood as even a fond father's heart could desire to see. His handsome face was glowing with health and pleasurable excitement, and his tall, well-made figure was set off by the orthodox hunting costume of scarlet coat, and spotless doeskins. He held a small silver-mounted whip in his hand, and as he stood there twirling the lash round his fingers with easy, unconscious grace, Mr. Dillon thought that he was a son of whom any father might be justly proud.

"I want you to drop this letter at the post-office on your way; it won't delay you a moment, as it is stamped already. It is to that confounded rascal Jackson, about the interest of his mortgage that fell due last month."

"I suppose he has been dunning you for it, the impudent usurer! I'd give the best horse I ever rode for leave to lay my whip on his shoulders for only five minutes."

"Easy, boy, easy. Our hand is in the lion's mouth, and we must draw it out as gently as we can. We can hardly blame the man for asking for his money when it becomes due. I wish to Heaven that some

one owed *me* a thousand pounds, or even half the money!"

"And so would I, for I am very hard up just now. Could you spare me a few pounds, sir? That saddler fellow in town is dunning me for the price of the last saddle and bridle I got from him."

"See if you can stop the fellow's mouth with this," said Mr. Dillon, handing his son a five-pound note. "I shall have more for you in a day or two when the tenants have paid the rents."

"All right," said careless, handsome Hyacinth, "and now I must be off. You are looking pale, little one; you must promise me you will take a drive before dinner," and he kissed his sister before he went away, for after a fashion of their own, those two men dearly loved the fair-haired, delicate girl.

Mr. Dillon went back to his accounts, and the old weary, harassed look came once more into his face. But he was not to be left quiet very long, for Pat Flanagan again opened the door.

"What is it now, in the devil's name?"

"'Tis another little bill, sir. Musha, bad luck to the whole pack ov 'em, every day they see a pavin' stone!"

"Didn't I tell you not to bring me any more of those infernal bills to-day?"

"Sure enough you did, sir, but sure what good was that? The kitchen below is full ov 'em, an' if I said the yard outside, I wouldn't be goin' asthray. The divel a lie in it! I'm fairly harished wid the whole ov 'em, an' moreover the cook is dhruv out ov her seven sinsis wid the way they're all gathered round the fire discoorsin' wan another, an' all their pipes in full blast."

"You should have sent them off one after another as soon as they came."

"Be the tare of war, sir, that's aisier said than done! 'Ye have no call to be annoyin' the masther this a way,' ses I, 'an' he only just riz out of bed wid the gout in his fut. 'Tis enough to dhrive it up to his stomach or into his head,' ses I, 'the set ye're makin' on the dear gintleman. Can't ye wait for yer money till he's ped himself? Samson was a strong man, be all accounts, but sure he couldn't pay money when he hadn't it. The tinints will all come in durin' the week,' ses I, 'an' there will be no delay in life then to every mother's son ov ye gettin' what's due to ye.' Oyeh! let me alone, sir," with a toss of his head—"I might as well be whistlin' jigs to a milestone, as to thry to make 'em hear to sinse or raison!"

"Well, Pat, you must contrive to get rid of them. I have not another pound on earth to give to any one.

All the money I had I gave to my son before he went out. Tell them all to come again this day week, and then they shall be paid in full. I shall have money then, though I haven't it to-day."

"Faix, sir, them was the very words I said to 'em."

"Well, go down and say it over again. And be sure you don't come back with any more such messages."

"I won't, sir, if I can help it," and once more exit Pat Flanagan from the dining-room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOSTER SISTERS.

Disparity of rank, or birth, goes for little with those who have been cradled to sleep by the same hand.

THERE was no further interruption for some time, and Mr. Dillon and his daughter began to hope that the duns had been put to flight, for that day at least. Determined to make the most of this welcome respite, they resumed their several occupations, and for some time the silence was only broken by the scratching of Mr. Dillon's pen. However, in about half-an-hour Pat Flanagan again appeared at the door.

"What brings you back again, after all I said to you?" demanded his master, in an angry tone.

"'Tis a girl ov the MacDermotts, plase your honour, hither from Ballycross. She's not a dun at all, sir, but a dacent girl wid a message from her father," replied Pat apologetically.

"It is poor Oonagh," cried Miss Dillon, who was greatly attached to her foster sister. "Tell her, Pat, to go upstairs to my own parlour, and I will follow her in a few moments."

"'Tis the masther himself she wants to see this time, miss. Her father isn't at all well in himself, an' he sint her up wid his rint. 'Tis a variation surely, glory be to goodness! to have any wan at all comin' wid money, instead ov comin' for it," and Pat's face expanded into a broad grin.

"I hear, Pat, that you are one of Oonagh's numerous admirers," said Mr. Dillon, restored to good-humour by the prospect of receiving money, instead of paying it.

"You're welcome to your game, sir."

"All I can say is, that you have shown very good taste, for Oonagh is a pretty girl, and will not go penniless to any husband who is lucky enough to get her."

"Folly on, sir, folly on. Sure I'm listenin' to you."

"Pat, you can bring Oonagh up here," said Grace, wishing to relieve the embarrassment of the poor fellow, who was now standing on one leg, and now on the other, rubbing his hands hard together, and looking as sheepish, and bashful, as it was possible for a love-sick swain to look.

With great promptitude Pat left the room in obedience to the desire of his young mistress, and soon returned with Oonagh, who made a respectful curtsey when she came inside the door.

"Welcome, Oonagh," said Grace, advancing and kissing her affectionately. "Why, I haven't seen you for an age. You are cold, dear; come and sit by the fire until papa is ready to attend to you."

"I made bold to bring you a few fresh eggs, miss," said Oonagh, laying down a little basket behind the young lady's chair. "Sure I know that there's plinty ov 'em here, but so itself; don't I often hear you say that you never ate such good eggs as comes from Ballycross? They *are* fresh an' sweet tasted, there's no denyin' it. Anyhow, you're always good enough to say so."

"And I always think it, as well as say it," said Grace, with the engaging condescension of a true lady, for she knew it would make her foster sister happy to think she was pleased with her little present. "You never, Oonagh, bring me anything that is not nice."

"Yes, miss. An' that's what makes me fret that I never have anything rale nice to bring you. Nothing but a few eggs, or a basket ov chickens, ov an odd time."

"But, Oonagh, I like *your* eggs and chickens better than any other, and therefore I am always very glad to get them. But see, papa is now ready to attend to you."

The girl took the money her father had entrusted to her care from her bosom, and with much hesitation, and many apologies, explained that he was unavoidably obliged to be a little in arrear this Gale, instead of paying the full amount of his half-year's rent as usual.

"An' my father desired me say," she continued in earnest tones, "that he hopes your honour will excuse him this time, as it was the very first he was ever behindhand on Gale Day, an' wid the help ov God it will be the last. We both ov us would live on a male a day sooner than be back wid you, but this time, sir, we couldn't help it, dear knows. The crop rotted on the ground wid us, an' our best cow choked herself wid a raw potato, before any ov us knew it at all. But sure, sir, you know yourself what a wet saison was in it, an' you hard, moreover, ov all the bad luck that we had wid our sheep."

"I did hear it, and was very sorry for it, for I know that your father is a decent, honest man, who would pay the last farthing if he could," said Mr. Dillon kindly.

"Long life to you, Mr. Dillon, sir; in sayin' them words, you said nothing but the thruth. We sthruv very hard to make up the money, though we *are* short a little, but we knew who we had to dale wid, an' that your honour wouldn't be puttin' keepers on us, or takin' our cattle to the pound for a thrifle."

"It is a great deal, Oonagh, that would make papa put keepers into Ballycross, or send your father's cattle to the pound," said Grace. "He wouldn't do it for your mother's sake."

"My father knew I'd have no call to be onaisy while you wor to the fore. 'You have a frind in coort,' ses he to me, 'while Miss Grace is there,' an' sure if he never said it, I knew it my own self."

"He, and you, only did me justice, Oonagh."

"An' plase God, sir, we hope to have the rest for you very soon."

"I can't be hard on an old tenant like your father, for I am well aware that he has had his full share of the bad times, as we all have had. I am convinced that he'd pay the full amount if he could, for if there is an honest man on my estate, that man is Martin MacDermott."

The eyes of the loving daughter filled with tears at this tribute to her father's worth, and it was a moment before she could reply.

"He's all that, sir, thanks to you for givin' him his merit; an' why wouldn't he? Himself, an' all that ever came before him lived undher your honour's family, an' had pace, an' plinty, when poor tinints on other estates wor harished, an' rack-rinted, an' ruinated, horse an' fut. Sure, sir, it only stands to raison, that good landlords will always have good tinints."

Mr. Dillon laughed very heartily.

"My good girl," he said, "you have now in a few words solved one of the problems of political economy."

"I don't rightly undherstand you, sir."

"I dare say you do not, but it is the case, nevertheless. Oh damnation!" This expletive, which burst forth suddenly, was not addressed to any one in particular, but wrung from him by a more than usually sharp twinge of agony in his gouty foot. His face became almost purple from excessive pain, and large drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"I see you're not well, sir, so I won't be throublin' you now to write the resate," said Oonagh, with a woman's ready tact. "It will do any time that's convanient."

"I am better now, still I will take you at your word, for I am not fit for any more business to-day," said poor Mr. Dillon faintly.

"Come with me, Oonagh, my dear," said Grace, "for my father must go to bed at once, and I will send Pat to take him to his room. He understands how to manage him, better than any one else. Come with me to my own room, for I have some pretty things my brother gave me to show you. And you must have something to eat before you walk back to Ballycross."

The two girls, leaving Pat Flanagan to put his master to bed, went upstairs to a room that Grace when she returned from school had got fitted up for her own special use, and which no one but Oonagh, outside the family, ever entered. It had a southern aspect, and looked out on the flower garden that was cultivated by Grace herself, with the help of Pat, who did all the coarse, hard work of it under her inspection. It was a sunny, cheerful apartment, looking just what it was, the sitting-room of a lady. There was a recess at each side of the chimney-piece; in one was a bookcase well stored with the best authors, and in the other was an easel. There was another recess, but much deeper, at the opposite side of the room, and in this hung a crucifix beautifully carved in ivory. In the centre of the room was a table with her writing-desk, and a large vase of flowers, while in the window was a smaller one, with

her workbox, and the book she was reading at the time. Over the chimney-piece was a good copy of the Ecce Homo of Annibal Caracci. This was the only picture in the room except a portrait of the late Mrs. Dillon in oils, which was considered by those who had known her to be an excellent likeness, and on that account much valued by Grace, though she did not remember her mother, having been a mere baby when she died.

It was a plainly-furnished, simple room, without any pretensions to luxury, save a good piano opposite the window might be considered luxurious, but it had the look of *home*. The nameless, subtle grace that can be given but by a lady's hand, constituted its only charm. The furniture, with the exception of the piano, was old and of little value, and the carpet was faded and much darned. But the window hangings were of the whitest, daintiest muslin, and the flowers in the vase were freshly gathered. Books, and sheets of music, and odds and ends of feminine work, were all lying about, though without any disorder. The room and its contents bore distinct evidence that the *genius loci* was a woman, and one of cultivated, and gentle instincts.

Miss Dillon rang the bell, and ordered the housemaid who answered her summons, to bring luncheon.

She did not think that she stepped in the least out of her own proper place, when she sat down to eat with the poor country girl, the daughter of her father's tenant. Oonagh was her foster-sister, the child of her nurse, and was besides too modest, and humble, to presume on her condescension, or be inclined to forget herself because of it. In the privacy of this, her own peculiar sanctuary, Grace could be as friendly, and affectionate with Oonagh as she pleased, and often treated her to many little dainties that of course she could never have at home. It was not friendship as the word is understood in the world, that united those two girls, for there was too wide a difference between them in all respects for that. The great disparity of birth, and rank, and the incompatibility of thought, and feeling, were all too broadly defined to permit of friendship, or even association. But there was the freemasonry of similar age, and sex, and the natural yearning that youth always feels for something like itself. The feeling on one side was that of protecting kindness, and on the other was profound admiration, and gratitude, at once affectionate, and respectful. When to all this was added the fact that they were both nursed by the same mother—which in Ireland constitutes a claim that is never ignored—and it will

be seen that the bond uniting those two young girls, so very dissimilar in every respect, was one of no common character. And it was noticeable, that notwithstanding their mutual regard, the great difference that was between them in birth, and social position, was never once lost sight of by either.

When the good things that had been brought up on the luncheon tray had been disposed of, Grace said:

"It strikes me, Oonagh, that you are getting careless in the way of your clothes. You never have anything new now."

"Sure enough, miss, I don't. 'Tisn't that is givin' me any trouble. How could I think of gettin' new clothes while we wor back in the rent?"

"You were always good, Oonagh; good, and sensible. But you are too pretty to be wearing that shabby old dress for ever. See, here is one I bought for you when last I was in town;" and she took from a drawer a quantity of printed calico, which, though very cheap—for she could not afford to make expensive presents—was still pretty, and fresh-looking, and made Oonagh's eyes sparkle with pleasure.

"Thank you ever so much, miss. Faix, it was

no harm for me to come to Castle Cloyne this mornin'."

"And when it is made, Oonagh, you must come again to let me see how you look in it."

"Fake an' sure I will. Sure that's the laste I can do, afther getting the makin's ov such a beautiful gownd. But sure, miss, you won't let me go without hearin' a song; just one little song," she pleaded, with all the love for music that seems innate in the Irish race.

"Oh, certainly. Well, what shall it be?" said Miss Dillon, sitting down to the piano.

"Well, miss, whatever will be most plasin' to yourself is what'll plase me. Sure all your songs are so beautiful, 'tis hard to make a choice among 'em."

"Well, then, I shall sing the very last I got. My brother brought it to me when last he was in town;" and selecting a piece of music, she began to sing:

The life that was mine lies far behind me,
My day is fading to silent eve;
The glories of noontide no longer blind me,
The gauds of the world no more deceive.
The hopes that once lured me on so gladly,
Lie withered, and dead on a ruined shrine,
And I say to my heart, beating low, and sadly,
"What hast thou done with that life of mine?

"What hast thou done with the restless yearning,
That, soaring to heaven, you chained to earth?
The inward lights that, so purely burning,
You put aside as of little worth?
The friends that loved me have all departed,
One by one to the shadow land,
And I linger alone, and broken-hearted,
With nothing but ashes in either hand.

"Could aught of earth have the power to win thee,
Oh, lonely, sorrowful heart of mine?
Thou, with the impress of heaven within thee!
Thou that wert fashioned by hands Divine!
What is there left of thy visions splendid,
The love that was true, and the hope that was high?
Thy dreams are over, thy story ended,
And nothing is left thee, except to die!"

CHAPTER XII.

OONAGH LOSES HER FATHER.

Songez que chaque fleur,
Doit son éclat, doit sa fraîcheur,
Et les doux parfums qu'elle exhale
A la piété filiale.

DEMOUSTIER.

THE autumn had come and gone, and it had passed very slowly and sorrowfully to Oonagh. Her father had not recovered his health, but on the contrary each day when it came had found him weaker, and more feeble, than he had been the day before. The dispensary doctor had been to see him several times, bnt his visits had brought no amendment to the patient, and finally Oonagh, as a last resource, thought she would send for the best physician in the neighbouring town, though she well knew that his visit should be paid for at a rate that she could but ill afford. But she said to herself, that whatever the fee

might be, yet it would be well spent if it gave her father a chance of life. It was only a chance, her own sense told her that—but she determined that he should get that chance, and when she had done all she could, she would leave the issue in the hands of the great Arbiter of life and death.

When this celebrated physician—in whom, humanly speaking, was her last hope—had left her father's room, Oonagh followed him outside the door where his horse was waiting for him, and said in a voice that trembled with anxiety: "Oh, sir, have you any comfort to give me?"

He looked keenly at the quivering lips, at the soft gray eyes suffused with tears, and though well used to scenes of misery, his kind heart ached for a creature that was so young, and fair, and so soon to be left desolate. He thought it would be cruel to buoy her up with false hopes, or impart a transient feeling of security, that would only make her future sorrow more intense and bitter.

"My good girl, your father is very ill," he said gravely.

"He is, sir, *foreer!* But sure now that you saw him, an' know what ails him, you'll be able to set him on his feet agin in no time, wid the help ov God."

"Life and death are in God's hands, and we must submit to what He wills."

"Surely, sir. But a grate docthor like yourself, can do a power ov good."

He smiled at her simplicity, but said no more, knowing that the truth would come home to her gradually as time went on.

"I must go now," he said, "for my time is precious, and I am wanted elsewhere."

"When will you come agin, sir? or will you wait until I sind for you?"

"I need not come any more. Whatever can be done for him, can be done by the dispensary doctor."

"I don't mind the money at all, sir," she cried eagerly. "If it was the last pound that was in the house, I wouldn't begrudge it. An' why would I? Sure it is his own, an' he has the best right to it."

"The money, my good girl, makes no difference. If I thought I could do any good by coming again, I'd do so willingly, but I really scruple taking your money when I can't do your father any good."

"Is that the way ov it?" she said, comprehending his meaning for the first time. "Oh, my father! my poor old father!"

She covered her face with her hands, and the

tears she could no longer restrain, came trickling down between her fingers.

"You must not let him see you like this," said the physician. "Everything like excitement, or agitation, must be carefully avoided in his presence. What you have got to do now, is to keep him as easy, and peaceful as you can, for he is very ill with heart disease, and worry or trouble of any kind would be highly injurious, and might even shorten his life. So be very careful."

"Oh, then, sir, I'll go bail that his life won't be shortened by as much as even a loud word. An' I thank you for tellin' me, for I might break down before him, wan time or other, if I didn't know how it was. My poor heart will be breakin' inside ov me, but so itself; what hurt? Och mavrone! what trouble is out fornent me, an' I was never used to it!"

She stood aside to let the doctor mount his horse, and then ran down the path like a hunted creature, till she came to the well that was at the end of the field. Here she flung herself down on the damp grass, and wept, and moaned, with all the passionate abandonment of the Irish peasant women. Her cries and sobs could not disturb her father *there*. She could ease her bursting heart in that lonely spot, and no one could see, or hear her, but He who was soon

to be her only father. After some time a hand was laid gently on her shoulder, and looking up she saw the old servant bending over her, with looks of the tenderest compassion.

"Whisht now, 'a ragal! Whist now, or you'll kill yourself intirely, so you will; an' 'pon my conscience, you're very nearly kilt as it is."

"Oh, Molly, Molly! how am I to live at all without my good, lovin' father?" and the poor girl's tears burst forth afresh.

"He *was* a good father, Oonagh, an' you'll miss him. I'm not goin' to deny it, surely; but killin' yourself won't do him no good at all. If you're knocked up, what is the poor ould man to do, I ax yourself that?"

"I'll give you hand an' word, Molly, I won't cry any more—while I'm out fornent him, I mane, for the docthor said he wasn't to be throubled, or fretted at all. But how will I be able to hould on, when I see him dyin' before my very eyes?"

"God will help you, 'a villish, never fear. It will be hard on you, I own, but we can go through a dale more than we think. 'Tis often well that we can't see all the hard fortune that's on before us; if we wor to see it, we would lie down an' die at wanst. Child, look at me! I berrid my husband, an' seven

as fine childher as ever stud on a poor woman's flure, an' I had to bear it all. When the first ov 'em died, if I knewn what was before me, I'd have clifted myself. But I was ever an' always hopin' that some ov 'em would be left to me, an' that kept me on my feet, an' my heart alive in my bosom."

"An' when the last ov 'em was taken from you?" asked Oonagh, interested in the old woman's sad history, notwithstanding her own grief; "what did you do then?"

"I was used to the throuble be that time, an' it was not as sthrange to me as it was at first. An' when I put the last ov my fine boys in the coffin, I knelt down alongside it, and thanked God that He left me on my feet to take care ov 'em all, an' that I was able to have for 'em everything that they wanted. It would be a different story wid 'em if they hadn't their mother, an' that thought comforted me, an' kept me up. An' you see, here I am to-day, afther it all, an' I have to get through my day's work, an' put up wid the rough, an' the smooth, that's sure to come to every wan that's livin' on another person's flure."

"An' do you ever think ov 'em, Molly?"

"In coorse I do. Many a night I do be awake thinkin' ov 'em all. An' they come to me in my

dhrames, sometimes wan, an' sometimes another. But I thry to put 'em out ov my head by day, barrin' when I'm in the chapel, or at my prayers, for if I didn't, I'd never do my bisness rightly. An' though I do be ever, an' always prayin' for them, sure, well I know that they are all prayin' for me in heaven, my good, honest husband, an' my seven little innocent childher, that never committed a sin."

"That ought to comfort your poor heart, Molly."

"An' signs on, it do. Sure, what other comfort have I, but to think that they are all in heaven before me? The first money I ever airned afther I went out to service, went to put a fine tombstone over 'em all."

"An' they're all in the wan grave?"

"Well, 'tis a'most the same thing, but 'tis the wan headstone stands for all. An' afther the stone was put up, I saved a few pounds more, that's in the hands of Father O'Rafferty, to bury me wid 'em all, when my own time comes round. Before I'd touch a penny ov that money, I'd lie down in the ditch, an' die ov hunger. Sure he knows what I gave him that money for, an' he'll take care ov it for that."

"But all this time, Molly, my father may be wantin' us, so we may as well go home."

"Sure enough, he may. But, asthore machree,

before you go near him you must wash your eyes, so's that he won't see the signs ov cryin' on 'em."

"Did you know, Molly, that my poor father was so bad?" asked Oonagh, as they walked towards the house.

"Eyeh! I did, sure; this long time past."

"An' you never told me? Oh, Molly, that wasn't kind."

"Wisha, what good would it do you to know it? What the ear won't hear, the heart won't fret for; that's an ould sayin' in the Irish. Sure, I thought you'd know it soon enough. If I told you when first it came into my mind, 'tis lyin' alongside your mother in Kilcarrol churchyard you'd be to-day, wid the dinth ov frittin', instid ov bein' able to take care ov the ould man, now that he wants care."

Few traces of her recent agitation were visible in the face, or manner of Oonagh, when she returned to her father's bedside. She opened the little window to admit the last rays of the waning sun, and then she noticed for the first time how wan, and hollow were his cheeks, and how much, and sadly he was altered. She wondered at her own blindness, and stupidity in having gone on from day to day, without having seen what was so patent to all other eyes.

"I never thought ov losin' him," she said to herself; "an' if I did itself, I wouldn't let it come near me."

She tried to bear up as well as she could, for her father's sake; but it is hard work to try to be cheerful when the heart is breaking. But it was a brave heart that was in Oonagh's breast; how brave and true it was, the story of her after-life will show.

But all too soon the day came round, when she and her first great sorrow were to stand together, face to face.

For some days the old man had been gradually sinking, and being quite sensible of his own condition, he desired that the priest should be sent for, to give him the last consolations of his religion. He had always led a very primitive, simple life, had never wronged anyone of a shilling, or a shilling's-worth, and, like Nathaniel, was a man in whom there was no guile. He had as few accounts to settle with his Maker, when it came to the last, as was consistent with human frailty; and, therefore, his preparation for death was neither difficult, nor distressing to him.

It was the eve of Christmas—a dark, bleak day, the hours of which were marked by frequent showers

of rain, and sleet. The evening came down darker, and bleaker still, than the day had been, as if in sympathy with the gloom, and trouble that reigned within the house. Oonagh and the old woman went through their usual tasks, for whatever their trouble was, the machinery of the farm, and household, should be kept going just as usual. Their business, however, was not of a nature to task their energies very much, for there was only one pig to be fed, one cow to be milked. When the frugal supper of potatoes and milk was over, and that Molly was engaged in the dairy, and Paddy smoking his pipe by the fire, Oonagh proceeded to light the Christmas candle, which could only be done by the "vanithee," or mistress of the house.

The origin of the Christmas candle in the houses of the Irish peasantry, is lost in the mists of antiquity, the custom having been first adopted in the country, when it was converted to Christianity by St. Patrick. At all events, this is the account of it most generally believed and accepted. It is intended to typify, and commemorate the star that appeared on the first Christmas night in the heavens, to announce to the Gentiles the birth of the Divine Infant, who was sent to redeem the world. It is a holy, and beautiful custom, transmitted down from one generation to another, with

scrupulous regularity, and is observed by the people of the south, and west of Ireland, with the same reverent and earnest spirit, with which it was observed by the first Irish Christians, twelve centuries ago.

The Christmas candle is always the best, and longest that can be procured, and once lighted it is never put out, but suffered to burn away to the end. If it is a more than usually large one, which is often the case—for those particular candles are made very large—it often remains lighting, until far into the evening of Christmas Day. Once lighted and left in its own place—which is always in the recess of a window, so that it can be seen from a distance—it is never touched again, even to be snuffed, nor is it considered right to make use of it for ordinary purposes. To prevent this, which would be considered a sort of desecration, there are other candles always lighted in the same room. A very curious superstition is attached to the Christmas candle, which may probably account for the scrupulous care with which the people avoid touching it, or meddling in any way with it after it is lighted, and set in its place. If it is put out, or dies out of itself before it comes to the very end, it is considered most unlucky, as it betokens that a death shall take place in the house before the next time that a

Christmas candle shall be lighted. It may therefore be imagined, how carefully it is watched, and guarded from the hands of thoughtless children, a gust of wind, or anything that would tend to upset, or even shake it in the smallest degree.

When Oonagh had lighted the Christmas candle, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," she laid it reverently in its place in the window, and then went to her father's room, to sit up with him for the rest of the night. He was asleep when she went in, so wrapping a warm shawl round her, for the night was cold, she sat down by the bed to commence her long, dreary vigil. There was a candle burning on a small table at the bed's foot, and it showed her the old man's face as it was turned towards her. His temples thinly covered by a few gray hairs were sunken, the features were pinched and sharp, and over all was a pained and anxious expression, that even sleep could not smooth away. As she gazed on him, and thought of all his care and love for her, she knelt down beside him, and silently thanked God for the grace He had given her, of never having wilfully grieved that aged heart, or added by any disobedience a single gray hair to that hoary head.

The long winter night wore on slowly, and silently,

and still the girl kept her patient, and solitary watch. Once or twice, she stole out to the kitchen, partly, to stretch her limbs that were numbed from being in the same position for a long time, as well as half frozen from cold, and partly, to see if the Christmas candle was still burning in the window. Imbued with a large share of the superstition of her class, and country, she was simple enough to think that if it burned down brightly, and evenly, to the socket of the candlestick, no one would die in that house until Christmas Eve came round again. When she had satisfied herself on this point, she went back again to her father's room, to resume her watch, and pray, and weep silently, as before.

About daybreak he awoke, and smiled faintly when he saw the anxious face that was bent over him.

"Oonagh, *anien dheelish*," * he said feebly, "my time is getting short, an' there is something on my mind I must say to you before I go."

"I was wishin' myself to ax you if you had any last word to say, or injunction to lay on me," she replied in a low, quiet voice. "Tell me now whatever it is you'd like I'd do, an' I give you a

* *Anien dheelish*—My dearest daughter.

faithful promise, that, if life an' health are left to me, it will be done, wid God's help."

"I was an honest man ever an' always," he continued, "an' all that ever came before me wor the same. No one knows me better than you, Oonagh, for every thought in my heart I made known to you. Sure you wor all I had to open my heart to, an' you never ga' me cause to be sorry for doin' it. Well, as I lived honest, I wouldn't like to renage from that now that I'm goin' to die, nor lave it to any wan to say, that he lost by me or mine."

"No wan can say that ov you, father. Sure you don't owe anything, barrin' what you owe to your landlord?"

"Child, that's just what's throublin' me. The rint that's due ov me is lanin' on my heart. Part ov the Michaelmas rint is due yet, an' March will be here in no time, an' there is no money, nor anything we could make it ov."

"God will give it to us, father; never fear."

"The masther is a good man, an'," after a pause, "no wan was ever harished, or dhruv to beggary by him, or any man ov his name. That's well known ov 'em. But that's no raison why the honest man shouldn't get his own."

"I'll do my livin' best, father; I can't say more."

"I know that, 'a cushla machree, but so itself. You never could work this farm wid the load ov debt that's hangin' down on it. If you wor a boy, you might be able to do it by dinth ov hard slavery, but what can a poor girsha do, but starve, an' starve, an' break her heart over it? No, darlin', you never could keep your hoult here, unless you wor to marry some wan that had money enough to clear off the arrears, an' start fresh agin. Is your heart still set on John Molloy, Oonagh?"

"My mind is the same towards him that ever it was," she replied, "an' if I don't marry him, I never will marry any other man."

"Well, I'll say nothing so agin' him. He came in for good manes lately be the death ov his brother, an' he may settle down now, an' have sinse. I put no dyin' command on you regardin' him, wan way or the other. Folly your own likin'; you'll do what's good an' sinsible, an' nothing else. Marry him if you like, but if his mind is changed to you—an' I hear a good dale ov his matchmakin', here an' there —in the name ov God let him go. I lave you free to do as you like; only, child, look well before you, for wanst the words are said over you by Father O'Rafferty, there is no goin' back."

She could only answer by pressing his hand in both

her own, and stroking it softly. She could not trust herself to speak, lest she should utterly break down.

"I'm gettin' dhrowsy agin," he said feebly, "but before I go to sleep, kiss me wanst more, my lovin', dutiful child, that never grieved her ould father's heart. May God reward you, an' mark you to grace, an' give you lovin' childher ov your own, in good time!"

He laid his withered hand in benediction on the bright, young head that was bowed down beside him. Exhausted by all this unusual excitement, he very soon fell asleep again.

After some time, Oonagh rose from her knees, and went out to the kitchen to look once more on the sacred candle. When she opened the door communicating with the kitchen, she found herself, to her great horror, almost in total darkness, for there was no light whatever but that of the cold, gray dawn struggling in through the window. The Christmas candle although not half burned down, was no longer burning! It had probably been extinguished by a sudden gust of wind. At this sight of ill omen, the poor girl's fortitude completely deserted her. She was weak from anxiety, and her nerves were all unstrung from long-continued night-watching. The tears that she had hitherto succeeded in restraining,

lest the sight of them should have the effect of disturbing her father, now burst forth unchecked, and she wept long, and bitterly, for her heart was full almost to bursting. With that sudden and unaccountable extinguishing of the Christmas light, had gone out her last desperate hope of her father's life.

And this was Christmas morning!—the morning on which the angels sang the first carol, and announced to the world "tidings of great joy"; but to the weary heart of this poor desolate girl, it had brought nothing but sorrow, and despair.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN IRISH COUNTRY WAKE.

Thou art the victor, Death!
Thou comest, and where is that which spoke
From the depths of the eye when the bright soul woke?—
Gone with the fleeting breath.

FELICIA HEMANS.

THE old man died in that sleep. He never even moved again, and it might be said that he had ceased to exist, rather than that he died. It was by the ashen hue that spread gradually over his face, that the devoted daughter who knelt beside him knew that he was gone, and that she was alone in the world. Her only near relation was a sister of her father's, who lived with her family at such a considerable distance, that a meeting between them was not a thing of frequent occurrence. Although Oonagh did not know much of this aunt, yet her heart yearned to her as the sister of her dead father, and

her first care was to send one of the men employed on the farm, to the house of Mrs. Clancy, to acquaint her with the fact of her brother's death. She was not expected to arrive until late in the evening, as Oonagh's messenger had to ride fully fifteen miles, before he could reach her house.

The short winter's day was spent in making all the preparations that were considered necessary, for observing the customary wake of such a decent man as Martin MacDermott. Oonagh was so prostrated by her excessive grief, and the fatigue of being for many nights without sleep, and almost without food, that she was quite passive, but a kind neighbour came in to do what she could to help her. This woman and Molly set to work vigorously, and made such good use of their time, that long before night had set in, everything was in readiness for the wake. The body of the old man was "laid out" on the bed on which he died, on sheets as white as snow, over which was a handsome counterpane, borrowed for the occasion from the housekeeper at Castle Cloyne. The wooden roof of the bed was draped with white sheets, looped up with bows of black ribbon, a sort of drapery that had a weird, and solemn effect, making the dead face, and rigid form beneath, look more awful than they would have done if canopied only by the bare wood.

When this, and all the other details had been arranged to their satisfaction, the two women sat down to rest for a while, and contemplate the effect of their labours, old Molly declaring that "the poor ould man was the finest corp, that she had ever sot her two eyes on."

The next scene of their operations was the kitchen, which after they had thoroughly cleaned, they arrranged in the manner suitable for such occasions. Everything portable, with the exception of the chairs and a couple of tables, was put out to the barn, so as to make all the room possible for the numerous guests that were certain to arrive before the night. Chairs and seats of every description, borrowed from the nearest neighbours, were ranged along by the walls. A large table at the extreme end of the kitchen bore a plentiful supply of cups and saucers, tumblers, and glasses; showing that though the cause of meeting was a melancholy one, yet everything that could conduce to the comfort of the mourners was near at hand, and though they might be sad, yet certainly they should not be either dry or hungry.

When the last sad rites had been rendered to the dead, a considerable number of persons having by that time arrived at the house, Oonagh, as being the female next of kin to the deceased, stood up at the head of the bed, and raised the first strain of that

most weird, and melancholy of all funeral chants, the Irish keen! It would have been contrary to all tradition, and custom, if this was done by any other woman than the nearest relative, and not even by her, until the last dismal toilet had been completed, and the defunct "laid out." Until then the mourners should weep in silence, for it is a superstition among the peasantry that loud lamentation has the effect, not only of disturbing the last moments of the dying persons, but even of drawing them back from the heaven to which their souls have taken flight. But at the end of three hours, which time is adopted in honour of the three hours that our Saviour's body hung upon the cross — the death-cry is raised by one woman, and all the other women who are in the house join their voices with hers, to swell the awful chorus of the melancholy keen.

There are many circumstances that prove in the most conclusive manner, the great antiquity, as well as the Eastern origin of the Celtic family, and among these, not the least noticeable is the peculiar way in which they lament, and bury their dead. All the ancient people of whom any knowledge has come down to us, bewailed their deceased friends with the same elaborate ceremony, and passionate vehemence, that are practised by the Irish peasant of the present

day. In the sacred writings are numberless examples of this among the Jews. We read there of "the mourners going about the street, when man goeth to his long home"; of people rending their garments, and strewing ashes on their heads, to denote the intensity of their sorrow. When the Lord went to the house of Jairus the ruler, whose daughter was dead, He found "the minstrels and the multitude making a rout," and He told them to give place, for that the damsel was not dead but sleeping. When He went to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead, He found that "many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." In the book of Jeremiah we read, "Call for the mourning women, and let them come; let them hasten, and take up their lamentation." There are many more texts to the same effect to be found in the Scriptures. Later on, we find that the Greeks, who were the most intellectual, as well as the most imaginative of the ancients, sung the death-chant for their lost friends, and doubtless they did so, not altogether from sorrow, but because such occasions called forth all the poetic, and graceful character of their genius, and the majestic construction of their beautiful language. The Romans employed hired mourners, who were denominated "Mulieres Præficæ,"

to chant the death-song, which in the Latin was called Ululo, nearly identical with the Irish Ullaloo. The Irish, and the Scottish Highlanders, the two great branches of the Celtic family—the most poetical, and in many respects, the most conservative of modern peoples—have from the earliest ages bewailed their dead in the measured cadence, which is called by the former, the Caoine or Keen, and by the latter the Coronach. The chieftain was borne to his last resting-place, amid the piercing notes of the death-chant, pealed forth by a thousand voices, and it was equally poured forth for the poor peasant, who had died far away in his lonely cabin among the hills.

Who that has once heard the Irish keen, can ever forget it! There is a world of passionate sorrow, and despair in the upper notes, and a world of pathetic sweetness in the lower ones. Now it swells out with a sublime, and awful grandeur, piercing to the very brain with its sharp, thrilling agony, and now it falls with an infinite softness, and pathos, that go straight to the heart, and fill the eyes with tears that cannot be repressed. And all through this wail, wild and barbaric as it is, there runs an exquisite melody, a poetical cadence, which though harsh and savage in the ears of the stranger, and the foreigner, are full of beauty, and interest, for all who are the children of the

old sod. The death-chant of the Celtic race is dying away before the march of civilisation, and the hard realities of this nineteenth century—more's the pity! —but it is not yet altogether dead. It still lingers in the Scottish Highlands, and in the remote districts of the south, and west of Ireland; and in the latter, many elderly women are still pointed out, who have obtained much local celebrity as amateur, or professional keeners.

Although that Christmas Day was a wet and stormy one, yet the bad weather did not prevent people from coming to the wake. Some of them came from the immediate neighbourhood, and others from a considerable distance. About nightfall they began to come, dropping in singly, or in groups; and later on, men came on horseback, with their womenkind on pillions behind them, while their clothes, saturated with rain, and splashed with mud, showed that they had come a long distance. Among those who came in this fashion, were Mrs. Clancy, Oonagh's aunt, and her husband, who had lost no time in obeying her summons. As soon as they alighted, the husband led his weary horse off to the stable, while his wife hurried into the house to take her part in the keen that would be raised on her arrival, to do her special honour, as being, with

the exception of his daughter, the only relative of the deceased. Once more the wild, piercing wail arose, and fell in the death-chamber, in mournful and passionate strains, the leading voices being those of Oonagh, and her aunt, while all the other women joined in the chorus, according to the time-honoured custom observed on such occasions.

When the keen was over, Mrs. Clancy in the most matter-of-fact manner, proceeded to the kitchen, to get some refreshment for her husband, and herself, which they both required after their long ride in the wind and rain. As soon as the meal was over, he sat down by the huge fire to smoke his pipe, and discuss the latest news with all the other men assembled there before him, and she went off to make preparations for tea, and act for that night as mistress of the house in Oonagh's place. She was a very active, bustling woman, who delighted in making herself busy; and though her sorrow for her only brother was truly sincere, yet she looked forward with no little pleasure, to meeting many of her old friends, and neighbours, that she had not seen for a long time, and who would be sure to come to the wake. In this expectation she was not disappointed; and between receiving, and conversing with each new-comer, and dispensing the hospitality

of Ballycross, even though it was only *pro tem.*, her grief for the dead, and her sympathy with his orphan daughter, were for a time relegated to the background.

At midnight the house was as full as it could hold. The old, and the married men, were crowded round the kitchen fire, smoking by turns, and talking on whatever subjects most interested them. In the background were the young men, and girls, talking too after their own fashion, and, if the truth must be told, indulging here, and there, in a little sly flirtation. In the death-chamber only were observed the solemnity, and gravity, that were proper and becoming. Oonagh sat at the head of the bed, and though the elderly married women who kept watch with her, spoke at intervals to each other in drowsy, subdued whispers, she never spoke at all, but sat wrapped up in her own sad thoughts. When any one arrived who was either related to, or connected with the family, the keen was again raised, as a special compliment to that person. At the first sound Mrs. Clancy forgot her duty as hostess, and rushed into the room to take part in the cry, in which she was assisted by all the other women, especially by those who were considered good keeners, and who felt no small share of pride in their pro-

ficiency and skill. When that wild burst of grief was over, things settled down again into the old groove; the women in the room with Oonagh began to talk in the usual monotonous, sleepy tones, and Mrs. Clancy went back very composedly to superintend the distribution of innumerable cups of tea, and glasses of punch, the manufacture of which afforded her occupation for the rest of the night.

Among the young people at the upper end of the kitchen were two persons whose conversational powers were at all times in great request, and just now were most generously exerted for the amusement of the company. One of them was John Molloy, whose loud voice, and extraordinary phraseology, were heard disputing with every one that would listen to him, as he tried with his usual impudence, and forwardness, to engross the whole conversation, and force his own opinions on the rest of the company, greatly to their amusement, as was evident by the half-suppressed laughter that went round after any of his "tall English." The other person was Pat Flanagan, who, being their landlord's "own man," was treated with great respect, and listened to with more attention than was paid to Pleasant John, of whom all the rest got tired very soon.

"Come, Pat, tell us a pleasant story that will help

to pass the night for us," said one of the young men.

"Sorra story have I," replied Pat; "there's nothing at all stirrin' about the place; an' the masther is so bad ov late wid that cursed gout, that 'tis seldom I can lave the house."

"But you read the newspapers, man, or you hear the gintlemen upstairs readin', an' talkin' about 'em anyhow; sure, 'tis all wan. What's the good ov livin' wid quality, if you don't hear some news now and thin? an' such a fine scollard, too, as you are! Why, 'twould be enough for the likes ov me, that can't read or write, to talk that a way."

"Well, I do get a squint at the papers sometimes, I won't deny it. When they are read in the parlour they are sint downstairs, an' then I have 'em all to myself. I do be readin' 'em in the mornin' while I'm waiting for the masther's bell, to call for his clothes, that I'm afther brushin', an the hot wather to shave himself."

"Is there any fightin' goin' on anywhere?" inquired an elderly man. "Sure, I remimber that when I was a *bouhal oge*,* we were always fightin' wid that limb ov the divel, ould Boney. 'Tisn't

* *Bouhal Oge*—Young boy.

callin' him out ov his name to say he was a divel's limb, an' well I know it to my sad cost. My only brother was badly thrated by a girl he was very fond ov, an' in a fit ov passion he listed in the Connaught Rangers, an' he was kilt out there at a place called Paddyjoice,* an' many another dacent boy along wid him."

"Why, thin, that reminds me ov a funny story that I saw in a newspaper last week," observed Pat. "It was talkin' ov the Connaught Rangers that put me in mind ov it."

"Oh! let us have it, be all manes. 'Tis yourself, Pat avick, that can tell a story well, an' sure, that's no sort ov admiration, bein' all your life above at the coort."

"Oh! that's neither here, nor there," replied Pat modestly. "Howsomever, the story is a rale good wan, if I can only remimber all the ins, an' outs ov it. Anyway, here goes."

At this there was a profound silence, and all the company showed, by the attention with which they listened to him, the great interest they took in the promised story.

"I suppose ye all hard ov a place called Spain?"

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* Paddyjoice—Badajos.

"Where is it, eroo, an' what sort ov a place is it at all?"

"I was never there myself, so I can't tell ye for certain what sort ov a place it is; but I think it is at this side ov America, only a dale nearer. The masther was there onct, when he was a young man, an' he gives it great commendation intirely. Ah, sure ye all hard ov it; 'tis where we had all the millia murther wid that ould Boney, the divel's luck to the villyan!"

"Well, we h'ard tell ov the place."

"Well an' good; if ye did, 'tis all right. We have no more fightin' wid Boney, for he's dead an' berrid long ago, an' 'twas rale spite an' madness that he couldn't have any more fightin' that kilt him. Sure, 'tis a queen they have now in Spain, instid ov Boney. 'Tis the fashion now, you persave, to have queens instid ov kings."

"Oyeh!" This in a tone of great incredulity.

"Begor, 'tis the thruth I'm tellin' ye. Sure, 'tis a queen we have ourselves, for we wouldn't on any account, be behindhand in the fashions. 'Tisn't a king we have over us at all, but Queen Victoria; becase, ye see, we're so ginteel we must folly the fashion."

Ignorant though his auditors were, they knew

that so far he spoke the truth; for very few, among the male part of them at all events, that had not some knowledge of the formula on law papers containing the words of "Our Sovereign Lady the Queen."

"Well, the Queen ov Spain wasn't well in herself at all lately, an' she was ordhered be her docthors change ov air. She wasn't at all sorry, for she had taken a great longin' to see forrin parts. So she got herself ready, an' come over to London to see life, an' get a little divarshun out ov herself. Ov coorse, she saw all the sights ov London, an' 'tis there the great sights are, sure enough. I was there wid the masther some time back, so you see I have a good right to know.

"Well, whin the Queen ov Spain saw all that was to be seen in London, she began to think that it was a'most time for her to pack her boxes, an' start for home. There was only wan thing she didn't see, an' that was a review ov the sojers, an' she didn't like to go without seein' that sight. So she sint for the head man ov the army, an' tould him she had a great longin' intirely to see a review. This was the Jook ov Cambridge, an' along wid bein' the head man ov the army, he was the Queen's first cousin.

"'Oh! wid all the pleasure in life,' ses the Jook. 'Anything at all to plase a lady,' ses he. 'An' what day would it shuit you to see a review?' ses he.

"'The sooner the betther,' ses she, 'for my thrunks is all packed; an', moreover, I'm badly wanted at home, for a lot ov blaggards is makin' great disturbance there.'

"'Would this day week shuit you?' ses he. 'Or, if you'd like it betther, we could have it the day afther to-morra."

"'That's the chalk, an' chalk it down,' ses she, quite plased; 'for my passage is taken for this day week, an' if I don't go that day, I'll have to forfeit the money.'

"'All right,' ses he; 'we'll have the review the day afther to-morra, to plase you.'

"An' sure enough, the day afther to-morra, there was a grand review in a part ov London called Hyde Park; an' the Queen ov Spain was there, in a fine open carriage, wearin' her best clothes, though the rogue ov the world purtended before, that they wor all packed up. An' the Jook ov Cambridge was there, alongside the carriage, on horseback, to show her everything, an' point out all the manœuvres an' variations ov the review.

When it was all over, he tould her that the sojers would march past, to give her a great salute, in honour ov her bein' the Queen ov Spain.

"'Who are thim?' ses she, when a ridgment past by.

"'Thim is the Guards,' ses he. 'Aren't they fine min?'

"'H'm,' ses she, 'they're well enough.'

"'They're the finest min in the British service, or in any other service either,' ses he. 'That's given up to them be very good judges,' ses he.

"'There's good judges wan way, an' good judges the other way,' ses she. 'I wouldn't fancy them much myself.'

"'You're hard to be plased,' ses he. 'But here's the Highlanders; you can't deny but thim is fine clever min,' ses he, 'an' no mistake.'

"'I'm denyin' nothing,' ses she. 'Have it your own way.'

"Well, to make my story short, he couldn't get her to give as much as wan word ov praise to any ov the ridgments that marched past her carriage, afther all the throuble he had in gettin' up the review to plase her. At last he got quite offinded, which was no admiration in life, and looked as black as twelve o'clock at night.

"'Who is thim?' ses she, when they wor all nearly past.

"'Thim is the 88th Ridgment,' ses he.

"'Oh, bloody wars!' ses the Queen ov Spain. 'Is thim the poor ould Fàg-a-ballaghs?"

"'I don't know what you mane be that nickname,' ses he, as stiff as a crutch. 'They're Her Majesty's 88th Ridgment ov fut, or Connaught Rangers,' ses he.

"'Thim's the sojers that I have the graw* for,' ses she, 'an' why wouldn't I? Sure they come from poor ould Ireland, an' all the world knows, that Ireland an' Spain is related on the double. I know thim fine fellas well,' ses she, 'an' I have every raison to be thankful to 'em.'

"'They're great fighters, I'll own to that,' ses he. 'But they're not a bit betther than the rest that you turned up your nose at.'

"'*Oh, ma grine chree 'hu!*† was every mother's son ov ye!' ses she, when the sogers was passin' by; an' she sthretched out her two hands to 'em. 'It's long till I'd put ye in comparison wid any ov 'em, for ye're the flower ov the flock, if as many more wor in it,' ses she.

"'Are you cract, woman?' ses the Jook, gettin'

* *Graw*—Love.

† *Ma grine chree 'hu!*—My heart's delight!

into a great fury. 'What do you mane be makin' a holy show ov yourself, before all the dacent people that's in it?' ses he.

"'Oh, lay me alone!' ses she. 'You don't know what's goin' through my heart this minit. 'Tis aisy enough for you to be lectorin' me this way,' ses she, 'when me, an' my little sisther, an' our poor mother, wor obleeged to be hidin', and flyin' from post to pillar, without a screed to our backs, an' thim poor Irishmin fightin' our battles an' takin' our part whin we wor down in the world,' ses she, 'an' I'm not the wan to forget ould frindship,' ses she.

"'I like a joke well enough,' ses he, 'but fair play's a jewil all the world over. It is aisy enough wid *you* to be talkin'. Faix, 'twas yourself that was high, an' dhry, when we wor taking' your part, an' spindin' our money in your cause, the same as if goolden guineas wor only jackstones, an' sindin' our fine min to be kilt, and murthered intirely, for the sake ov yourself, an' that ould fagot ov a mother ov yours,' ses he.

"'Why, thin,' ses the Queen ov Spain, 'what did my poor mother ever do to you, to make you ballyrag her, an' call her out ov her name?' ses she.

"'Oh, by George! as you put it to me that way, I don't mind tellin' you,' ses he. 'Sure, 'tis no saycret,

anyhow, for the whole 'varsal world hard it. Didn't she go and demane herself be marryin' a private sojer that was standin' sinthry outside her parlour windy, though her husband was only a month berrid!' ses he. 'If you call that dacent behavor, I don't know what you'll say next,' ses he. When we put yer foes undher yer fut, an' lint ye money aftherwards to set ye up in housekeepin', an' thought to be paid after a little time, 'twas the heighth ov abuse we got from ye, instid ov our hard cash. An' sure, 'tis well known, how ye stole a march on us in regard ov yer matchmakin', an' never had the dacency to invite any ov us to yer weddin', afther all we done, an' all we lost by ye. To hear you talk, honest woman, one would suppose that you took me to be a common omadhawn,' ses the Jook."

The narrator of this veracious history paused as soon as he had come to this part of his story.

"Go on, Pat! Go on, man alive! What did the Queen ov Spain say to the Jook thin? I hope she gave him tit-for-tat. Begor, that was great intirely!"

All those exclamations came from different voices, showing the great interest that was taken by the company in what was a *story* in more respects than one.

"Well, I'm rale sorry I can't give ye the rest ov it," said roguish Pat, with a very grave face, "for

when I got as far as that, the paper was tore. Sorra a lie in it. Fake an' sure! I was as much disappointed myself as any ov ye, for I was longin' to know how the battle royal inded. I searched the house, high up an' low down, for the bit that was tore off, but I never come across it. I'm thinkin' that the kitchenmaid put a hand in it, to light the fire wid it."

"Oh, what a pity! I'm sorry now that I h'ard the bignin' ov the story, as I can't hear the ind. I'd bet any money that she was well able for him. Oh! never fear, the women are great intirely, when it comes to handlin' their tongues. My hand to you, she gave it to him, an' he was a deserver ov it surely, for it was a mane thing ov him to throw her mother in her teeth. Well, if you b'lieve me, it was a dale maner to boast ov the money he lint her." All this and as much more in the way of comment, proved what an appreciative audience Mr. Pat Flanagan told his story to, and how firmly the poor ignorant people believed in it.

The only dissenting voice was that of Buck Molloy, who was not quite so ignorant as the rest. Besides this, he had sat all through, swelling with mortified vanity, on seeing another engrossing that share of general attention which he thought should in right of his own superior merit, belong exclusively to himself.

"I objectionate that narration," he said dictatorially. "I objectionate it in the most obnoxious complication. Confusion to the word of thruth is in it from bignin' to ind, as I can prove by entherin' into a concatenation, an' disquisition on the head ov it, wid any of the gintlemin here present."

"Yarra, hould your whisht, you great big ape!" said the elderly man before mentioned. "You're not fit to hould a candle to Pat Flanagan, in the way ov discoorse, nor never was, though you don't think so yourself. Sure he goes in, an' out, ov the parlour at Castle Cloyne, an' hears what the quollity do be sayin' there; moreover, he's a bright boy himself, an' has paper an' books galore to lay his hands on, whenever he has the time for it, an' signs on, he's very knowledgable, an' mighty pleasant company for a piece ov a night."

This decided opinion of the elderly man settled the dispute, and Shawn Sugagh, finding the tide running against him, went away. The rest of the company began to leave also by degrees, and by six o'clock there was no one in the house but a few old women who sat in the "corp room," shivering in the chill air of the cold winter's morning, and almost stupefied for want of sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORMY DEBATE.

Alas! how light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love.
THOMAS MOORE.

MRS. CLANCY remained with her niece for a few days after the funeral, to set things to rights, as she expressed it, a task for which Oonagh herself was for the present quite unequal. She went over the farm from end to end, examining everything with a keen and experienced eye, and saw with surprise, and dismay, that all there was not in the flourishing condition that she had imagined. The live stock was much reduced, and there was but a poor prospect of sowing the seed in the spring, as the ground had not been sufficiently manured or prepared for it. She was surprised at all this, for her brother, when they last met, had made no complaint to her, and

consequently she had hoped that the hard times had not pressed so sorely on him, as they had done on others, and like all who are themselves in fairly good circumstances, she could not ascribe this unfortunate state of things to any other cause than carelessness, or gross mismanagement. However, she was wise enough to keep this opinion to herself, but she resolved to take Oonagh's affairs into her own hands for some time to come, and see if she could not put them into a more satisfactory condition. In the meantime she would look out for a suitable husband for her niece, a person who would be possessed of sufficient capital to free the land from all debt, stock it newly, and bring it back again to something like its old state of prosperity. In this well-meaning if injudicious plan, she had not the least idea of meeting with any opposition from Oonagh, who would be only too glad, she argued, to chime in with a plan that was not only usual and natural, under the circumstances, but one of manifest advantage. She knew that her niece was soft and gentle, but she did not know the depth of her character, the wisdom with which she could form her own plans, and the quiet determination with which she could carry them out.

Early in the day on which this notable bustling

woman was to return home, she and Oonagh were at breakfast, *tête-à-tête*, for Molly and the men were absent on outside business, and she thought it was a good time to impart her views to her niece on the subject that engrossed so much of her own attention.

"When I go home now," she began, "I'll sind you one ov the boys, either John or Martin, whichever you like yourself, to manage the place for awhile, until things are put right somehow. You're not aiquil to manage such an extensive farm as this yourself, an' until you get a man ov your own to do it, wan ov my boys can do it for you."

"Thank you, aunt, for thinkin' ov it, but——"

"Oh! don't say another word; 'tis no compliment in life, an' if it was itself, you're heartily welcome to it. Sure, I'm the only relation you have in the world, barrin' the Carrolls that wint to America, an' wor lost on the passage—the Lord be betune us an' harm!—an' if I don't look afther you, I'd like to know who would. Blood is thicker than water all the world over. My sons are both as good, clever boys as a mother ever reared, though I say it that oughtn't to say it; but, sure, that's neither here or there. So you can say now which ov 'em I'm to sind hither to you. I'll go bail he'll do his livin' best wid the farm, an' it wants that, for it was greatly

neglected this long time to all appearance, in regard ov your poor father bein' so long sick."

"Thank you kindly, aunt, a thousand times over, but your own bisness is too heavy to let you spare either ov the boys."

"Oh, don't mind that. Sure if either ov 'em was a dale betther, you're welcome to him for as long as you want him. That won't be long, please goodness, for next Shrove we'll have some dacent, clever boy that will settle himself wid you for good an' all."

"I won't be married next Shrove, nor maybe never at all, so you may as well put marriage for me out ov your head."

"Tut, tut; that's all the *ràmash** ov a foolish young girl that doesn't know her own mind. Your heart is sore yet, *'a graw geál,* an' you don't like the thought of a bachelor at all. But so itself; this time twelve months you'll be singin' a song ov another tune, an' that's only what it ought to be. Ov coorse, it isn't in nature that you could live here by yourself, an' moreover you never could manage this large farm, an' all the workpeople in it without a comrade."

"I thought ov everything, an' turned it all over

* *Ràmash*—Nonsense.

in my mind, until my poor head is fairly addled from thinkin','' said the weary girl with a sigh. "But it all comes to wan thing in the end."

"An' what is that, eroo?"

"I must sell the land."

"Sell the land!" exclaimed Mrs. Clancy in a voice of the greatest consternation, and astonishment, "sell the land! Oh, queen ov Heaven! did any wan ever hear the like?"

"I'm as sorry myself, aunt, as you are, but what can I do?"

"What can you do, is it? Eyeh! what would you do, but just what I'm tellin' you? Let wan ov my boys manage for you till Shrovetide, an' then marry some decent, honest man, that'll have a thrifle ov money. You'll have the land an' he'll have the *arrighidh*,* an' I'd like to know what's to prevent ye both from bein' very happy together. That's what you're to do, an' a good sensible thing it will be."

The poor girl sighed, and as she did so, her hand came involuntarily in contact with the broken sixpence that lay concealed in her bosom.

"Sell the land, inagh! Why, Oonagh, you must be cract, to think ov it even. It is the best farm on

* *Arrighidh*—Money.

Mr. Dillon's estate, for the size ov it, an' you talk ov it just the same as if it was only a cabbage garden, or an acre of bog."

"I'm just as fond of the place as yourself, but it is in debt, an' the debt must be paid. Sure you know well that Mr. Dillon must be paid his rint, an' where is that to be got if I don't sell the place? As for marryin' a man just for the sake ov his money, 'tisn't a thing that I could ever bring my mind to. An' well as I love Ballycross, I'd far sooner sell it than sell myself."

"Oh, holy Saint Bridget! did ever any wan hear the like since the world began? Oonagh MacDermott, you're out ov your mind, that what's you are, an' if you don't show more sinse and raison than what you're doin' now, I'll have you sint to the madhouse in Limerick, until this mad fit is well taken out ov you."

Oonagh smiled at this ridiculous threat.

"You think I wouldn't do it," said Mrs. Clancy in great wrath; "see if I don't!. It would be hard on me, I own, to have people say madness was in my family, in regard ov my two little girls that aren't preferred yet, but I'd sooner do it than let you make such a world's wondher ov yourself. Och mavrone! was there ever such a heart-scalded poor woman as what I am this day!" and covering her face with

her apron, she rocked herself back, and forward in a paroxysm of the wildest grief.

"Dear aunt, I can't bear to see you frettin' like this," said Oonagh, rising, and laying her hand softly on Mrs. Clancy's shoulder. "Sure if you'd only hear to raison, you'd see it is the best thing that I can do. I can't bear to see you so vexed, but all the same, I'd like to give everyone his due, an' not let any wan say he was a loser by my good, honest father."

"Don't spake to me, Oonagh MacDermott! Don't come anear me, I tell you! Oh, vo, vo! Did I ever think I'd live to see such a black, woful day! To see the splindid, fine farm, that belonged to my father, an' his father before him, an' that they wor so proud ov, an' the fine slated house on it that I was born in, going for a song, an' I obleeged to stand by, an' let it go. 'Tis for my sins, surely, that I'm condimned to pass through such a fiery furnish—what else?"

Oonagh waited patiently until this burst of passion would subside. When it did so after some moments, she sat down again, and resumed the conversation with her usual composure of manner, and gentleness of voice, as if there had not been such a stormy interruption to it.

"You see, aunt, there's nearly two years' rint due ov the land, an' where am I to make out that much money, if I don't sell it? The masther, I own, was very indulgent, an' patient wid us, but you know that wouldn't go on always. He has his own calls, an' he's not a rich man be no manner ov manes, an' he'd have to eject me in the long run, an' so I'd make nothing at all by holdin' on. Isn't it betther for me to sell it, an' get something for my intherest in it, an' clear my good father's name, than have the sheriff come down on me, an' lave me nothing at all?"

"What signifies two years' rint?" said Mrs. Clancy. "Sure 'tis nothing but a dhrop in the ocean to Mr. Dillon, an' the like ov him. He ought to remimber that you are the last ov a good ould stock, that lived on his ground for hundreds of years, an' that it was your mother that nursed his own daughter into the bargain. He'll forgive you every pinny if you only go the right way to work wid him, an' thin you can begin a new score wid him as fresh as a daisy. He never could stand the country if he threw you out on the wide world, an' you all that's left afther your dacent father."

"An' is it because I *am* the last afther my dacent father, that I'm to bring discredit on his name?"

exclaimed Oonagh, while a proud light kindled in her clear, earnest eyes. "An' is it because I *am* the fosther sisther ov his daughter, that I'd do what would make her ashamed ov me? Miss Grace Dillon must never have cause to say that the milk she got from my mother wasn't honest, an' thrue!"

"Have it your own way," cried her aunt; "but I renounce it. I'll not have hand, act, or part in it."

She had ceased crying by this time, and now sat back in her chair defiantly, with her arms folded beneath her ample chest, and her lips tightly compressed. Oonagh might sell the house and land, and burn all the furniture in a colossal holocaust, but she would never interfere again, at any time, or under any circumstances whatever. Never!

"I have no way ov payin' this heavy load ov debt but just to let everything go," said the poor girl, as if speaking to herself, while at the same time she looked out on the green fields that she loved so well. "God knows—an' He knows everything—that I'd live on a male a day, an' work my fingers to the bone, if I thought there was a chance ov my being able to keep the farm; but there is no chance, *foreer!* While I'd be strivin' to pay what's due, more rint would be risin' on me, an' there would be wages, an' rates, an' taxes, an' how could I work the land

with any advantage an' pay all, when there is hardly as much as a cow on it?"

"There *is* a cow on it," cried the aunt, forgetting her late declaration of non-interference. "I saw her myself this mornin' in the cow-house."

"She is sold, or as good as sold. Anyway, she's old, an' runnin' out ov her milk, an' won't sell for much; but whatever she brings, I want it to pay Dan Ryan for the coffin that he——"

"Let him wait for it," interrupted Mrs. Clancy, with a toss of her head.

"He can't do that, for he's a poor man wid a long young family, an' I know myself that he was obliged to run tick for the timber that made it. An' moreover, if I was never to handle another shilling beyant the price ov that cow, I couldn't bear to think that the bones ov my good, lovin' father wor lyin' in a coffin that wasn't paid for." And as she spoke, Oonagh's face was lighted up with emotion.

It is the last straw that is said to break the camel's back. This last speech filled up the cup of Mrs. Clancy's wrath.

"An' div you think, Oonagh MacDermott, that I'm goin' to sit any longer here listenin' to your cract *ràmash?*" she exclaimed, rising up with great

majesty. "As you'll neither lade nor dhrive for my biddin', I have no more to do but to rise out ov you. May God direct you, little girl, as I'm not able to do it."

She took down her ample blue cloth cloak from the peg on which it hung behind the door, and put it on with great deliberation. Then she opened the door, and passed out without even glancing towards her niece.

"Oh, aunt, where are you going?" cried Oonagh, running after her, and trying to bring her back again into the house. But the irate old dame was not to be mollified.

"Let go my cloak, child, an' let me go my ways. I see plainly that I have no bisness in this house, an' moreover that I'm not wanted there."

"But sure the horse isn't come for you at all yet, an' you never could walk from this to your own place."

"I'll thry it, anyhow."

"But the sky looks very black intirely, an' I'm in dhread that we'll have a power ov rain. You'll be wet to the very skin before you're over a mile ov the road."

"So itself. I'm neither sugar nor salt, that I'd melt just o' count ov a dhrop ov rain."

"Oh, aunt, asthore machree! don't lave me this

a way!" pleaded the poor girl, who was now crying bitterly. "Don't lave me in anger, for my dead father's sake. I'm very miserable, an' dessolate without that, if you only knew but all."

Mrs. Clancy, however, was not to be appeased by the tears and entreaties of her weeping niece, but in high dudgeon closed her heart against the streaming eyes, the sensitive, quivering mouth, the clinging hands, and the broken voice imploring her to stay with her "for her dead father's sake." She strode down the path to the stile with a sturdy step and a sullen brow, without ever looking back to where the poor orphaned girl was sobbing convulsively.

"Don't mind her, 'a cushla geál," cried old Molly, who had returned from the dairy in time to be a witness of the latter part of this scene. "The ould garron! 'tis a gizzard that's inside ov her instead ov a heart, an' a very hard one it is too. She was ever an' always a great collecthor ov a woman, an' sure I'm not the only wan that says it ov her. Alliloo! 'tis she that makes that poor disciple ov a husband ov hers shake in his shoes. My hand to you, she makes him sing his Kyrie Eleison in gallant style. You're well rid ov the ould Shedioge,* an' if she get's drownded itself,

* *Shedioge*—A bloated, puffed-up woman.

she wants something that'll cool her. Sure she never came to the house while your poor father lived—the Heavens be his bed this day!—but she was sure *to light a wisp* before she went away agin. Whisht now, Oonagh, whisht, alanna dheelish! Come in out of the could, an' I'll make a cup ov tay for yourself, and meself, that'll rise our hearts, an' dear knows we want that same. The cross-grained ould fagot! don't fret yourself no more about her. She's gone now, thank goodness, an' if we never see her agin, that the sight ov our eyes may never fail us!"

CHAPTER XV.

CANVASSING THE COUNTY.

I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother, the people, to earn a decent estimation of them; 'tis a condition they account gentle; and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitly. Therefore, beseech you, I may be consul.

SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT this time an event occurred which created no small sensation in the county, and particularly in the estate of Castle Cloyne. This was nothing less than a vacancy in the representation of the county, caused by the sitting member having accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. He had gone with his party through thick and thin, to use his own expression; was in his place in the House punctually, whenever any question of the least importance was before it, and waited with the most exemplary patience for the good time coming, when the loaves and fishes should

fall to the side that he had supported with such steady regularity. His patience and devotion to the party he had attached himself to, were after some time rewarded in a very satisfactory manner. There was a division in the House on a very important Irish question, and by a majority as overwhelming as it was unexpected, the Ministry was defeated, and Her Majesty's Opposition found themselves once more seated on the Treasury bench. The new Ministers did not forget the faithful adherents who had stood by them so gallantly in the days of their adversity, and among them was the gentleman who had vacated his seat in Parliament by accepting the Chiltern Hundreds, preparatory to accepting also a very influential, and lucrative situation in the Colonies.

No sooner was it known that there was a vacancy in the representation of the county, than a number of candidates came forward; each of them hoping that the successful one would be himself. There were at least "six Richmonds in the field," all eagerly setting forth their own claims on the popular favour; but as the day of nomination drew near, the six dwindled down to two. The other four, in sporting parlance, had got out of the running, for seeing that their chances of success were growing less and less as time went by, they considered that the better

part of valour was discretion, and prudently retired from a contest which, if persevered in, would end in certain defeat, made still more grievous by an enormous bill of costs.

Of the two gentlemen who had resolved on coming to the poll, Mr. Dillon of Castle Cloyne—who had not lost courage by his former defeat—was the most popular; though many of his best friends disapproved of his tempting fortune once more. They considered that it was unwise of a man so largely in debt, to encounter the heavy expense of a contested election, and by so doing add still more to the grievous burden laid on a property already heavily weighted, simply for the empty gratification of writing two additional letters after his name. Some of them went so far as to say, that they hoped the poor old gentleman wasn't "losing his head," and that some kind friend "who was for his good," would in charity interfere, and counsel, or compel him, to abandon a course that was sure to end in disaster, and ruin.

The solitary opponent that remained to Mr. Dillon, was a wealthy Manchester manufacturer who was ambitious of a seat in the Imperial Parliament, and hoped that by literally paving his way with gold, he would get into it on the shoulders of an Irish constituency. His agents were in every part of the county

scattering money broadcast—in an underhand, covert way it is true, for they remembered that there were such things as petitions against bribery, and corruption—but still surely, and with no niggard hand. Mr. Dillon had not much gold to scatter, but he also did some strokes of business in the way of bribing, as far as his purse, which was slender, and his credit, which still held good, allowed him. In every other respect but that of money, he had far and away, the advantage of the rich Englishman. He was no stranger, but native born. He was a resident landlord; one of the "ould stock," whose fathers had lived in Castle Cloyne from time immemorial, and been connected with both the gentry, and the people by many old, and fast ties of kindred, and association. Personally, Mr. Dillon was greatly liked by all classes, and conditions of men. By his own equals, and by the respectable middle class, he was popular for his genial manners, his unbounded hospitality, and lastly, because he had come from a family that had for ages been identified with the soil. By the peasantry he was almost idolised, because he professed their own creed; a creed to which all his race had clung with passionate devotion through the darkest periods of Irish history, for which many of them had given their lives, and many more of them had abandoned property,

and home, and country, to die exiles in foreign lands. Stories of their heroism, their honourable poverty uncomplainingly borne, and their chivalrous bravery, which had made the name of Irishman respected all over Europe, still lingered among the people, who now called to mind, and dwelt upon them, with a fond and exultant pride. Mr. Dillon lived among them, and spent his fortune in the country that produced it. He was by no means a hard landlord, but on the contrary reasonably indulgent to his tenants, and was called emphatically "the poor man's magistrate." The son was quite as popular as the father, for to all the father's good qualities, Hyacinth added youth, good looks, and a happy temperament that bathed everything it came in contact with, in its own joyous sunshine. So all things considered, "the cotton-spinner," as Mr. Egglestone was irreverently termed by a certain class of the constituency—who, though they had no votes, had voices—had a most formidable opponent in Mr. Dillon, even if his money bags were twice as full, and their contents dealt out with a still more lavish hand.

It may be asked what it was that had induced the master of Castle Cloyne, at his advanced age, and in his straitened circumstances, to wish for a seat in Parliament. Not only had he a reason, but he had

many, all of them appearing to him good and sufficient ones. In the first place, he wanted to obtain freedom from arrest, which impecunious members of the Imperial legislature regard as one of their greatest privileges. For many months he had been "on his keeping." Several writs were out against him, and more than one execution in the hands of the sheriff, while the bailiffs were lurking about the gates of his demesne, in a most persistent manner, at all hours between sunrise and sunset. His house was literally in a state of siege. All the windows on the ground floor were once more fastened down securely from the inside, and the doors guarded by short iron chains drawn across them, which were never slipped off the hooks wide enough to admit any one to enter until it was first ascertained beyond all doubt, that he who sought admittance was neither a bailiff, nor a dun. This state of things, though by no means any novelty in Mr. Dillon's experience, was very displeasing to him personally, as well as galling to his pride, and the only way by which he could put an end to it was by becoming a member of Parliament. He would most willingly have paid every shilling he owed if he could, but as that was not possible, there was no use in worrying himself about it, neither could he bear to be always a prisoner. He was resolved to be no

longer "a Sunday man," but free to breathe the pure air of heaven, and to come and go as it pleased him; free to hunt and shoot, and take the place in his native county, that he was well entitled to by his birth and fortune. These were all great privileges, and it was surely worth his while, he thought, to run some risk to obtain them.

Then again, no Dillon of Castle Cloyne had ever sat in Parliament since the first penal laws against the Catholics were enacted several hundred years ago, for since the passing of the Emancipation Act, by which they were all repealed, one thing or another had always arisen to prevent it. When that famous Act became part of the law of the land, Dominic Dillon was a minor, and when he did attain his majority, and for some years after it, there was no vacancy in the representation of the county. When it did occur he tried his chance, as we have seen, but without success, and another man went to St. Stephen's, and sat in the seat that he so greatly coveted. But now at last the long-wished-for opportunity presented itself once more, and he had not self-denial, or common sense enough to let it go by. This time matters looked more propitious than they did on the former occasion; at least everyone told him so, and he fully believed them. To all

appearance, there was not only a probability, but an absolute certainty that he would be at the head of the poll, and that at the end of several centuries, a Dillon of Castle Cloyne would be the sitting member for his native county.

In his family pride, as well as in his longings for senatorial distinction, Mr. Dillon had the keen sympathy, and ardent co-operation of his son. The young man was ambitious, and thought that a seat in Parliament was the first step in the path of honour, that was newly opened to the family. With the buoyant and versatile spirit of youth, he panted for change, for excitement, for any new turn of the wheel that would effect a change in the dull monotony of a country life, and give it some colour, and variety. When his father should be elected, he would accompany him to London; they would enjoy their lives there, and breathe at last free from the worry of bailiffs, and the impertinence of duns. Lodgings in some old-fashioned street, or square, was not a very brilliant prospect to look forward to, but then the chain would not be drawn across the inside of the hall-door, from sunrise to sunset, on six days of the week. He would be sure to find in the Great Babylon some outlet for the restless, and superabundant energy that was consuming him, soul and body, like

a smouldering fire. A season in London, he argued, would be worth ten years of the dull routine of Castle Cloyne; and Hyacinth, with the Dillon blood in his veins, never for a moment doubted the certainty of having the *entrée* of the best circles at the West End. He would there make the acquaintance of many young men who, though they might exceed him in wealth, or social rank, could not, however, do so in long descent, or in unsullied reputation. Hyacinth, poor fellow, had a great deal to learn and to endure before he could acquire the wisdom that only comes from rubbing shoulders with the world, and taking to heart the lessons and the sad experience that are sure to be taught in its stern school!

The only thing that gave either father or son any trouble, was the expense of the election. Where was that to come from? The county was to be traversed from end to end, to canvass the electors, and "entreat their most sweet voices." There were agents to be paid, and votes to be purchased—of course on the sly—and accounts to be opened with the hotels and public-houses at the various polling places, for lodgings, food, and drink *galore* for the freeholders, and stabling and provender for the horses of such of them as should have a long distance to come. Then a mob should be organised in every town, and well paid;

otherwise their performances in the way of shouting, cudgelling, and abusing the opposite faction, would to a certainty be of a very languid, if not neutral, character. If the thing were to be done at all, it should be done handsomely; there would be neither credit nor profit in half measures, to say nothing of the risk of ultimate defeat. A good old family was not to be let go to the wall, on account of a few beggarly thousands; that was clear.

But once more, where were the thousands to be got? To be sure there were five thousand pounds vested in trustees, the fortune of the late Mrs. Dillon, and by her marriage articles settled on younger children, and as there were no younger children but Grace, it would all come to her. She was perfectly willing to give up her right to this money, but she wanted two years of being of age, and consequently her signature was not worth the paper it was written on. The trustees were both dead, but their representatives altogether declined making themselves responsible, by consenting to have the money drawn, or even any part of it. Miss Dillon would be sure to marry, and her husband and children would hold them, to the last shilling they possessed, accountable for her five thousand pounds. It was very disobliging of them, Mr. Dillon and his son said; very mean and

shabby too, for the money would surely be made good, long before Grace came of age. Even if it was not forthcoming then—as the trustees shrewdly anticipated—neither she nor anyone on her behalf would ever do so base a thing as to turn round on the guardians of her fortune, and compel them to pay it a second time, to their own grievous wrong. But the trustees—hard-headed men of the world—were obdurate, and refused to let the money they held for the young lady be swallowed up in the bottomless pit of a contested election. They put no faith in the solemn assurance that it should be refunded to the last farthing; appearing to think that all the probabilities lay quite on the other side. Disappointed in this expectation, the Dillons had no other alternative than to negotiate a fresh loan at very high interest, or, as Terry Macnamara, their nearest relation and most intimate friend, pithily expressed it, "to kill another pig."

So the "pig" was killed accordingly, and another mortgage laid on the estate, in addition to all the others with which it was already so heavily burdened. Then when the "sinews of war" were in readiness, Mr. Dillon issued his address to the electors. It was a very clever composition, as well it might be, considering that four persons were occupied for nearly

a week in putting it together. The quartette consisted of Mr. Dillon and his son, Terry Macnamara, and Father O'Rafferty, the parish priest; and all the friends of the family agreed that it was the ablest and most convincing document that had ever been issued from the press. It set forth the claims of Mr. Dillon to the suffrages of the electors, which were in truth so palpable as to need no exaggeration: the hundreds of years in which his family had been rooted in the soil; their continual residence among their own people, and great sympathy with them, and challenged their opponent to prove that a bad or an exacting landlord had ever been known among the family of Castle Cloyne. This last part was Mr. Dillon's own composition, and it contained more truth than is generally to be found in election addresses. The next paragraph alluded to the bravery of the Dillons, which had been proved not only at home, but on every battle-field in Europe, where they had distinguished themselves as gallant soldiers and chivalrous gentlemen. This part was written at the dictation of Terry Macnamara, who having proved his courage by three times "facing his man," on the sod early in the morning, was entitled to be called an authority on all affairs of duelling or pitched battle. But the pith and marrow of the document

was that which was inspired by the priest, for it reminded the electors of that great Catholic county, that the Castle Cloyne family had in the worst of times adhered with great constancy to the old faith, and had lost and suffered much in consequence of that fidelity. The address concluded with the usual stereotyped flourish of calling on the electors not to be bribed by English gold, but to hold their votes as a sacred trust to be given to an Irishman, one of themselves, one of their race and creed, and one who was ready to die in their service!

Great was the enthusiasm called forth by this address when it made its appearance in the county newspapers, and was posted up in large type on the gates of the chapels, and on all the posts and dead walls in every town and village. The address of Mr. Egglestone, the candidate in the Conservative interest, was torn down, or bespattered plentifully with mud; his agents were insulted, and any one who was known to have promised him a vote, or to wish him well, was called opprobrious names, and held up as a mark for the finger of public scorn. So great was the general excitement, and so high did party spirit run, that an additional force of police was sent into the county, to assist in keeping the peace, and protect the freeholders who came to the poll, from being

maltreated. Two different mobs, well primed with whisky, and bearing flags that displayed emblems considered appropriate to the occasion, paraded the streets of the towns and villages, paid by the two candidates; and many were the shillelaghs flourished and the "scrimmages" fought during the few days that preceded the nomination, when "the barley got abune the bree." But as the belligerents were not killed, but only "kilt intirely," and as no greater wounds were inflicted on either side than could be easily cured by a poultice, or a bit of sticking plaster, the police, who expected this sort of thing as part of the usual routine of a contested election, wisely took little or no notice of the desultory warfare that was waged in the streets, or the furtive skirmishing that went on round corners, and in the back lanes. They knew that a certain amount of license was at all times claimed and allowed at a county election, and that when once the saturnalia was over, party spirit, and mock enthusiasm, well paid for, would evaporate as quickly as they had effervesced, and that when the event that had conjured up the excitement had passed away, the people would as a matter of course settle down again to their normal state of indifference and repose.

CHAPTER XVI.

"OVER THE WALNUTS AND THE WINE."

What seek I here to gather into words?
The scenes that rise before me as I turn
The pages of old times. A word, a name,
Conjures the past before me till it grows
More actual than the present.

L. E. L.

It was the evening before the first day of the election; a close, sultry evening in glowing August. Dinner was over in Castle Cloyne; the parish priest, who was one of the guests, had said grace; and Miss Dillon, the only lady among the company, had vanished from the room. As soon as the last flounce of her white dress was gone, the four gentlemen who remained behind drew closer round the table to enjoy their post-prandial glass of hot punch, and also to arrange the programme of the following day.

The guests who sat with Mr. Dillon and his son, were Father O'Rafferty and Terry Macnamara; the

first was the parish priest of Castle Cloyne, the second a relative of Mr. Dillon's, and his most intimate friend. They had assisted in composing his address to the electors, and now they had assembled together to hold the final council of war, and decide upon the course of tactics proper to be pursued in the forthcoming campaign.

It is almost needless to say, that the priest was a firm and active partisan of Mr. Dillon's, and ready to employ every means in his power, and that a clergyman could conscientiously use, to ensure success. There were many reasons to make him embark in the cause, heart and soul; but the first and greatest was, of course, community of creed. This was the grand bond that bound him to it. Had Dominic Dillon been a bad man, or an oppressive landlord, or, what he considered almost as bad, an absentee, the priest would still have supported him on the broad principle of his being a Catholic. But when, to being not only a Catholic, and the descendant of a long line of Catholics, who had lost so much for conscience' sake, it was added that Mr. Dillon was a good resident landlord, a warm friend, and a genial host, at whose table he was himself always a welcome guest, it is no matter of surprise that he threw himself with all his heart into the cause. He was a good-hearted man, this poor country priest,

who was never known to desert a friend, and, unlike the world, was most friendly when his friendship was most needed. The help of such an ally at a time like the present was a tower of strength. His influence over his flock was unbounded, and even with those who could not be ranked in it, he was extremely popular. It was said that, to a certainty, he could command ten out of every twelve votes in the barony in which the estate and village of Castle Cloyne were situated, and that whatever candidate he favoured had the best chance of being at the head of the poll.

The appearance of Father O'Rafferty, like his lineage, was anything but patrician, though it was very characteristic. He was a low-sized, round little man, with a full, good-humoured-looking face, a wide mouth, and a vulgar snub nose. But the homeliness of his features was atoned for by a splendid pair of black eyes, that made one forget everything else in the marvellous intensity and variety of their expression. They could flash with the fiercest rage and scorn, twinkle merrily with irrepressible fun, or melt into the utmost softness with compassion or charity.

To the full as ardent a partisan and as firm a friend was Terence—or, as he was always called, Terry Macnamara. He was Mr. Dillon's first cousin,

of his own age, and they had been schoolboys together, united even more closely by the tie of friendship than that of blood. As far as birth went they were on a perfect equality, the only difference being that the paternal ancestors of Mr. Dillon were Anglo-Normans, while those of Macnamara were Irish, pure and simple, without the slightest admixture of foreign blood in their veins. They were Celtic to the core, even to their very name, for Macnamara is an Irish word, meaning literally "son of the sea." From the earliest times they had been gentry in their native county, people of large property, and possessed of all the prestige that property is sure to carry with it, when it is accompanied by good birth. It would be an impossible task to trace their pedigree, for the founders of the race were lost in the mists of antiquity, although their descendants were rarely heard of, outside the bounds of their native county. But there they held their own well, and if they did not distinguish themselves greatly, were yet quiet, peaceful people, liked and respected by all who knew them. However, one member of the family was a notable exception to this rule; and, strange to say, this member was a woman! This Amazon lived in the time of Queen Elizabeth, to whom she was a bitter, unrelenting foe, regarding her person, country, and creed with the most impla-

cable hatred, which she manifested on all occasions, in the most determined and sanguinary manner. This "Banne Thierna," or female chieftain, was called by the Irish chroniclers of that time, Mauria Rhua, or Red Mary, but whether she obtained that sobriquet from the colour of her hair and complexion, or from the merciless, sanguinary nature of her exploits, neither tradition nor history has explained. But the chief aim of her life appears to have been hatred of the English invaders, showing them no mercy when they were so unfortunate as to fall into her hands. She kept great state in her strong castle of Leimneigh, in the county of Clare, exercising a princely hospitality, and by her generosity, haughtiness, unflinching courage, and unwomanly cruelty, made her name famous through the land. The Castle of Leimneigh is now only a ruin, and the bones of its once powerful and dreaded Banne Thierna have crumbled into dust, but the proudest families in Clare boast of being her descendants, and have what purports to be her portrait, hanging on their walls. Neither is she forgotten by the peasantry, who speak of the great "Mauria Rhua" with a mixture of pride and dread, while the native bards have celebrated, both in English and Irish verse, the story of her greatness and of her wickedness. The Irish poetry was written

with a vigour and enthusiasm, partly due to the character of the language, and partly because the object of their encomiums was a bold Irishwoman, who had struck many good blows for her country. The English verses were in every way much inferior, being only the very poorest doggrel, of which one verse may serve as a specimen of all the rest:

> The famed Mauria Rhua, she was my great grannum,
> And spent in great splendour, ten thousand per annum;
> In Leimneigh Castle she kept a strict watch,
> And hung all the Sassenachs that she could catch.

Terry Macnamara, the lineal descendant of this very strong-minded female, was the younger son of a younger son, and consequently as sparely endowed with the world's goods as such people usually are. When he came to man's estate, he got, through the family interest, a commission in a cavalry regiment, and, having done this, the family did nothing more for him, but left him to sink or swim, as Fate would ordain it, with nothing to support him but his pay. It was the usual story with poor Terry. His pay, in his own opinion, was wholly inadequate to enable him to live like an officer and a gentleman, and, with a young man's folly, he got into debt, which he had no means of paying but by the sale of his commission. When he returned home without a guinea in his

pocket, his family were so disgusted that they—metaphorically—washed their hands of him, and either could not, or would not do any more for him. The last was probably most near the truth. After a short time a sister of his father's died, and left him a small annuity, so very small, that people said it was hardly worth accepting; but poor Terry was very glad to get it, and contrived to make it sufficient for his wants. How he brought both ends of the year to meet on such slender support, was a mystery, but he managed to do it, somehow. If he had privations, no one was the wiser, for he never complained to anyone. Taught by the hard lessons of his youth, he never got into debt again, but made his small income suffice for his few and simple wants. His lodgings in the village of Castle Cloyne were of a very unpretentious character, and his tailor's bills were very trifling, although he was always dressed like a gentleman. But his laugh was as cheery, and his manner and air as high-bred and proud, as if he was the lord of a thousand acres. His sole extravagance was in now and again making a present to the little boy and girl that were growing up under his eye in Castle Cloyne, and were as fond of him almost as they were of their own father.

There was not a respectable house in the whole

country to which Terry Macnamara was not welcome to come when he pleased, and stay as long as it suited him; and the kindness that was offered so freely, and as freely accepted, was now the only debt that he was willing to incur. But hospitality in Ireland is so spontaneous, so freely given on one side, and so willingly accepted on the other, that the least obligation is never attached to it. Like mercy, it is twice blest, for the host is glad when a guest shares either in the abundance or the poverty of his table, whichever it may be, and the guest knowing this, and feeling that, to use an expression which is peculiarly Irish, he is *heartily* welcome, accepts the hospitality that, if the situation were reversed, he would give as willingly as it is now given to himself. But though Terry never denied his poverty, yet he never obtruded it on anyone; for he was not either mean or vulgar, and remembering the good blood that flowed in his veins, he always preserved his independence. And in proportion as he respected himself, he made others respect him also. He gave offence to no man, neither would he permit any man to give it to him; for his courage was undoubted, and he had fought several duels, after the fashion of Irish gentlemen in those days. Like the priest, he had told off his three score of birthdays, but, unlike

him, he was tall and thin, with a high-bred, handsome face, on which the word "gentleman" was stamped in unmistakable characters.

"What a pity it is that you can't make your appearance at the hustings to-morrow!" said the priest to Mr. Dillon. "To have Dominic Dillon's election going on while he is at home himself at Castle Cloyne, will be like sitting down to a wedding dinner when the bride and bridegroom are gone away. I'd just as soon have one as the other; they are both so tame and insipid that there is hardly a choice between the two."

"It *is* hard," replied the host, with a sigh; "but it can't be helped. The bailiffs—damn them!—are watching me as a cat would watch a mouse, and if I only showed my nose outside my own gates, they would pounce on me just as quickly. It is too bad, that while you both are fighting my battle at the hustings, I am to remain at home with poor little Grace."

"What is to harm either you or her?" said Terry. "And you will have your own man, Pat Flanagan, to bring you the news up from the village. You need not be at all uneasy about the election, for we all intend to work very hard. My young friend here," jerking his thumb towards Hyacinth, "will represent

you right well, and ride to the hustings at the head of your tenantry; and unless I am greatly mistaken in the lad, he will do you no discredit. The two best attorneys in the county are your law agents, and Father John here and I will do all the rest; so don't be worrying yourself into another fit of the gout. Everything will be all right; never fear."

"Is it finally settled who are to be the proposer and seconder?" inquired Hyacinth.

"Yes, it is finally settled. Wilson, of Beech Hill, is to propose your father, and your humble servant is to second the nomination."

"A better selection could not be made," observed Mr. Dillon. "Jack Wilson is a Protestant, and Terry Macnamara is a good holy Roman. Jack has his pockets full of money, and Terry has the old blood in his veins. That's an arrangement no one can cavil at."

"But the Englishman has more money than all the Wilsons put together; and to give everyone his due, he is no miser, but is scattering it right and left with a full hand. He bears a capital character, both at home and abroad, and I am really sorry that we must extinguish such a good fellow as Egglestone is, by all accounts."

"He is a rank Tory, anyway," put in the priest;

"and the best proof of it is that he has all the Conservative landlords at his back. Oh, don't I know the kidney of them! Half of them Cromwellians, and almost the other half Dutchmen who came in with the usurper William."

"They are all of them Irishmen now, whatever their forefathers might have been," remarked Hyacinth Dillon; "and right good fellows, and gentlemen to the core, the greater part of them are, and no mistake about it. I am sorry so many of them will be arrayed against us, but when this brush is over we shall all be as good friends as we ever were."

"I have always been on good terms with my brother grand jurors and magistrates," said Mr. Dillon, "and I hope to be so at all times, whatever way the election goes. Ten elections, not to talk of one, could bring no ill-blood between us. But your glass is empty, Father John. Hyacinth, pass the decanter."

"Not for me," cried the priest. "My allowance is one tumbler of punch daily, and I have already taken that."

"The decanter is with you, Terry. But probably, like myself, you prefer a glass of this old port."

"Not at all. I prefer a glass of good whiskey punch to all the port that ever came from Lisbon.

But the water is nearly cold, and I must ring for some that will be hot," and suiting the action to the word, Macnamara rang the bell.

In a few moments the summons was answered by Pat, who brought the hot water with him. When he had placed it on the table, he looked very significantly at Hyacinth, and then slowly left the room.

"By the way, sir, I have a favour to ask of you," said the young man, addressing his father, "and I am sure I need only mention it to have it granted."

"You are reckoning without your host, then, for I won't let Pat go to the election, if that is the favour you want."

"He has set his heart on going, and begged me to ask leave for him. It is not often he gets a holiday."

"Well, he cannot have any this time, that's all."

"As I am to be seconder to-morrow, I'll be seconder also to-day," said Terry, "and I second Hyacinth's request. Pat is a good boy, and deserves a little indulgence. Who is to do his business at the election, if he isn't to be there himself?"

"And who is to look after me, if I should get an attack of gout? No one understands how to manage me but Pat, and I can't spare him. Besides, he has a genius for getting into mischief, and as sure as he

goes to the election, so surely will he get himself into trouble of some kind, and do our cause a great deal of damage. Oh! I know him, and I know too the fiery blood that's in him, and that he got from his father. He is much safer here, believe me, than he would be at the election."

"I don't agree with you, father," said Hyacinth. "Pat is a steady fellow, though I must confess he loves to make a sensation, and is up for any amount of fun. Still, I will make a bet with anyone who will take me up, that he will conduct himself properly while at the election, if you are good enough, sir, to let him go."

"You will lose that bet."

"It will be a great disappointment to the poor boy," said Father John; "but all things considered, I dare say you are right. He might most likely get into some row that would end in finding himself in the hands of the police. Pat has no control over himself, poor boy, when he gets excited."

"He is his father's own son," said Mr. Dillon, "and blood is sure to tell in the long run; at least, that is my experience. I remember Pat's father very well, for we were both lads together, though the grass is growing over him for many a long year. He was a good-looking fellow, like Pat, but very poor, being

only herd in one of my father's mountain farms; a wild, lonely place it is too, as you all well know. It was a great place that time for the manufacture of pot whiskey, which was carried on with very little hindrance. It was no one's business, you see, to give information, and the gaugers were afraid to go there without a strong escort; some of them who had plucked up sufficient courage to go there alone, never came back, or at least they didn't come alive. But all that was before my time, and a good deal of what is said about such things may not be true. There is no potheen made there now, except an odd gallon now and then, just to keep their hand in."

"But about Pat's father, sir? You were going to tell us his story," said Hyacinth.

"Why, I thought ye all knew it; certainly Father John does; but 'tis a very old story now, for it all happened before you were born. Well, as I said, Barney Flanagan was poor—as poor as Job on his dunghill—but for all that he had a great spirit. He was the very deuce for fighting and love-making. He could no more help palavering a pretty girl when he found himself in her company, than he could help breathing, and the history of his various flirtations would fill a volume. His fighting qualities were so well known that he was elected captain of a party,

and his prowess at every fair green where he and his 'faction' flourished their alpeens, was marked by broken heads as plentiful as blackberries. My father often remonstrated with him on his belligerent propensities; but though Barney always promised amendment, the promise was invariably broken on the first opportunity that presented itself."

"He should have sent the scamp about his business," remarked Terry Macnamara.

"Well, so he should; but somehow he never did, though he was always threatening it. Barney was the son of an old tenant, and as honest as the sun; and, except when he was fighting or courting, he minded his business well, and was one of the best herdsmen on the property. In a man like that a great deal must be condoned, or overlooked altogether, and my father did both by turns. It is easy to part with a good servant, but not so easy to get another who will be as good.

"But Barney did not always escape with a whole skin, or without getting as good as he gave. 'Tis the fortune of war, and greater captains than he had to endure a reverse. One day that he headed his 'faction' at the fair of Castle Cloyne, the scrimmage was so fierce and long-continued that my father, as a magistrate, had to send for the military, and read the Riot

Act. The military—there were no police then—had to charge the belligerents with fixed bayonets. When some sort of order had been at last restored, there was a lot of wounded and disabled men lying about in all directions on the fair green; but, luckily, no one was killed outright. Among the 'kilt' the worst case was that of Barney Flanagan, whose skull was fractured, and his whole body beaten black and blue. In this deplorable condition he was laid on a door and brought to this house, as he was known to be one of the Castle Cloyne herdsmen. There was a bed made up for him in one of the back rooms, and a messenger sent off with a car to fetch his mother to take care of him. He was laid up for some months, and all the time attended by a surgeon, at my father's expense. At last he was well enough to be sent home to his cabin in the mountains. My father spent several hours lecturing him, and he listened with great apparent attention, and making many plausible promises for future good behaviour. When the horse and cart, with a feather bed in it, came to the door, he was helped into it and made very comfortable, with his head resting in his mother's lap. My father walked with them until they got out from the avenue to the public road, exhorting the invalid to turn over a new leaf, and avoid fighting for the rest of his life. When they were turning off in

the direction of the hills, Barney could no longer restrain himself, and feebly waving his arm over his head in a significant manner, cried out with all the strength he had left in him: 'Plase goodness, Masther, we'll be able to hould the stick once more.'" *

"What an incorrigible ruffian!" exclaimed the priest.

"What a brave fellow!" cried young Dillon.

"He was really brave," remarked Terry Macnamara, "and made of the same good stuff that won all our battles out in the Peninsula. It was that same bull-dog courage, only trained and disciplined, that kept the squares unbroken at Quatre Bras and Waterloo, when our men stood like rocks through the long summer day, against the repeated charges of the flower of Bonaparte's cavalry. What a splendid soldier that fellow would have made! *His* place would not be long among the common rank and file."

"Indubitably. But you know, what would be gallant conduct in a soldier was not quite the thing for my father's herdsman. So now, my boy, you know why I can't let Pat go to the election. He has his

* This anecdote is a literal fact. The man who acted and spake as described in the text, was herdsman to the author's father.

father's blood in him, and Heaven only knows what he might do, when he found himself in the thick of the *rookawn*. He would either be brought back here with a broken head, like his father, or be furnished with safe lodgings at the expense of the county, for breaking other people's heads. It is just a chance which it would be."

"But, sir, what was the end of Barney? He must be dead many years, for as long as I can recollect, Pat has been in this house."

"Not very long after that he got married to Pat's mother. The moth was so long fluttering about the candle that it got burned at last. Barney fell in love with a girl, that he had no more chance of getting as a wife than you have of getting the Princess Royal. She was the only daughter of a respectable farmer, who could give her a thousand pounds on her wedding-day, and never miss it. But to give the devil his due, Barney thought only of herself, and not of her fortune. When he proposed for her, her family laughed him to scorn, and when he had the egregious folly to argue the point with them, they put him by force out of the house, and he went off swearing he would marry her in spite of them all. He was not without some excuse, for he was distractedly fond of her, and she fully returned his

love. In some time, finding that nothing would move the father and brothers—there were three brothers, all tall, strong fellows—the lovers resolved to take their fate into their own hands, and marry without their consent, as they could not marry with it. She consented to elope with him, and meet him on a certain night in a little copse outside her father's farm.

"As his cabin in the hills was too far away to bring her there on foot, the scamp went to the stables here, and telling the groom that he was acting on his master's orders, he saddled the best animal there, and coolly mounting it, he rode off. She was a beautiful mare, called Hebe, famous both for spirit and speed, and was the grandam of my horse Tearaway, the best hunter I ever crossed. He found the girl waiting for him, true to her promise; in a moment she was up behind him, and they rattled away at a good pace, for the mare was quite fresh. It was a stormy night, and still remembered in the country for all the disasters that occurred both on land and sea. Still the lovers were not daunted, for with the good mare under them, they hoped to reach the hills very soon. But in this expectation they reckoned without their host. Even through the noise of the storm, they heard the clatter

of horses' hoofs behind them, and the three brothers shouting to them to pull up. Barney knew that their cattle were good, while his mare had the disadvantage of carrying double, what she was not used to. He also knew that a tough fight was before him, but for all that he did not lose heart. Telling the poor girl, who was nearly insensible from fear, to cling to him with both arms, he urged on the mare with voice and hand, and she gallantly answered his call, though half-maddened by the flashes of lightning, that were almost continuous.

"There was a river on ahead, and the bridge that spanned it was the nearest way to his home; but what was his consternation to find when he reached it, that the river was so swollen by the rains, that it had overflowed its banks, and carried away the piers of the bridge on the other side, though those that were next him were still standing. One half of the bridge had been swept away, and was floating in fragments down the river, and the other half would in a few moments inevitably share the same fate. It was a dreadful position that the unfortunate fellow found himself placed in. Behind were the three brothers, shouting with exultation when they saw him, as it were, delivered into their hands; and before him were the broken bridge, and the angry

flood that foamed below. But he never hesitated, for he knew that the mare he rode was game to the backbone; so he gave her the spur, and looking back at his pursuers, with the wild war-whoop with which he had often led on his faction at fair and market, he sprang on to the bridge. Hebe, true to her good blood and generous spirit, put forth all her strength for the leap, and flew forward towards the yawning chasm. But just as her fore feet touched the opposite bank, one of the brothers, frantic at seeing himself baffled, fired a shot that was no doubt intended for Barney, but it hit poor Hebe in the shoulder. With a wild neigh of pain, she fell back into the swollen river, and of course the lovers fell with her. But Barney flung one arm round a broken arch, and with the other caught the girl as she was drifting past him. Steadying himself as well as he could, through the masses of broken masonry, he brought her safe to the bank.

"When the brothers saw that they were safe at the other side, they knew the game was up, for none of them would follow his example, in taking such a desperate leap. To add to their rage and mortification, Barney looked across at them with a mocking smile. 'Oh, begor! afther all yer haste, ye won't be in time for the marriage.'

"He took the girl's hand, and led her away in full view of the angry men at the other side, who could do nothing but thunder out threats of vengeance against him. His impudence and coolness made them perfectly frantic, but he only laughed at them. He brought the girl straight to the house of his parish priest, and they were married. It was a strange wedding, and a strange figure they must have cut, as they stood before Father Pat, drenched to the skin, and half-dead from anxiety and fatigue."

"But what became of the gallant mare?" asked Hyacinth, when his father ceased; "was she drowned?"

"Not at all. She partly scrambled and partly swam down the river for some distance, until she came to where it was shallow, and the bank not so precipitous, and then she got ashore. At least this was the conjecture made on the matter by the men in the stables, to which she returned some hours after, covered with mud, and with a sorely wounded shoulder. My father was foaming with rage when he saw the state she was in, and swore by all his gods, that he would make Barney's shoulders as sore from the application of his horsewhip, as Hebe's had been made by the shot. But on hearing the story he forgave him. He admired him for his pluck and courage, and was very proud of the

mare, who soon got quite well under skilful treatment."

"But did her friends ever forgive Barney's wife, and come down handsomely with the cash, to set them up housekeeping?"

"They did not do either one or the other. My father, as their landlord, tried to reconcile them to the young people, but he might have spared himself the trouble. They never spoke to the poor girl again, nor did they give her any money. My father gave them a little farm at a low rent, to set them up in a small way, but they did not live to enjoy it. She got into a consumption, and only lived to give birth to Pat. I dare say the drenching, and being all night in her wet clothes, was the primary cause of it, and she took much to heart the displeasure of her family. Anyway, she died, and Barney never held up his head again, but died of grief, if ever man did, thereby falsifying a prediction of my father's, who often said that as he had not been killed in a faction fight, or drowned at the broken bridge, he was sure to be hanged. The poor fellow was always reproaching himself for having taken her from the comfort, and plenty of her father's house, to endure the hardship and privation that were her lot with him. By that time my father was dead, but knowing what he would

have done had he lived, I sent the infant to one of the tenants' houses to be nursed, and when he was old enough took him into the house, where he remained ever since. He is a good boy, and a smart servant, but I must own has a good deal of his father's hot blood and cool impudence."

"My good friend, we must remember that we were once young ourselves," interposed Father O'Rafferty, "and so we should make allowance for the light heart and high spirit of youth."

At this moment Pat himself appeared at the door, telling them that "Miss Grace desired him announce to the gintlemin, that herself an' the tay wor waitin' for 'em in the dhrawn' room."

It was refreshing to exchange the heated atmosphere of the dining-room for the cool air of the pleasant drawing-room at the other side of the hall, where Miss Dillon sat behind the urn, with a bright smile of welcome. The windows were all open to admit the soft, balmy air of an August evening, the room was fragrant with fresh flowers, arranged in china vases of priceless worth, and the well-appointed table, with its dainty china and gleaming silver, looked so bright and fresh that they felt as if suddenly transported into another atmosphere altogether. Everything in the drawing-room looked so cool and pleasant,

and suggestive of repose and peace. And not the least pleasant thing in the room, was the young hostess in her simple dress of white muslin, her only ornaments being natural flowers in her hair and in the front of her dress. Though not beautiful, she was young and gentle, and after all, when beauty is pitted against youth, gentleness, and a gracious manner, it is not always sure to come off the victor. One will make itself wings, and flee away, alas! all too soon, but the charm of the others dies but with life itself.

After having had some tea, the priest and Macnamara rose to go. Mr. Dillon and his son went with them to the hall-door, and all four stood on the steps to admire the loveliness of an August sunset.

"Good-night and good-bye, Dominic," said Terry, shaking hands with his host; "I shall not see you any more until you are a free man, and M.P. for the county."

"Bring back my boy safe and well to me, Terry, and I will run chance for the rest."

Macnamara burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's a good one!" he cried, "the best joke I have heard for many a day. One would think I was taking him off to lead a forlorn hope. Why, man, what's to happen him? Look at that young giant,

Father John—six feet tall if he's an inch, and his father asks me to bring him back safe, as if he was still a baby in long-clothes."

"Musha, thin, if he isn't aiquil to mind himself this time ov day, an' take his share in a scrimmage dacently," said Pat Flanagan, who stood in the background, with the freedom of a favourite servant, "he'll be the first man ov his name that couldn't do it. The first ov 'em at laste that I ever hard tell ov, an' I'm livin' on the land ov Castle Cloyne, man an' boy, for nigh upon four-an'-twenty years."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW PAT FLANAGAN CONTRIVED TO GO TO THE ELECTION.

Lord.—Who is this forward, pestilent fellow, that thrusts himself where he hath no right to be? Marry come up! times are changed, and things come to a pretty pass, when such as he could be tolerated for a moment. An I had my will, I'd make my horsewhip and his shoulders better acquainted.

Steward.—Ah, my lord, content you! He is young, and youth is ever hot-blooded and malapert; but he will acquire better manners when he is a little longer in your lordship's service.

NEXT morning after a hasty breakfast, and before his father was up, Hyacinth Dillon set out from Castle Cloyne, gallantly mounted, faultlessly dressed, and in all respects looking the thorough gentleman that he really was. He was in the highest spirits, full of pleasurable anticipations of the variety and excitement in which he was to take such a prominent part, and fully confident of its coming to a favourable ending.

Mr. Dillon and his daughter sat in one of the recesses of the large drawing-room windows, he reading the newspaper for her, while she employed herself in some needlework. They had a long, quiet day before them, for all the men about the place had gone off to the election, with the exception of Pat Flanagan, and an old groom who was too rheumatic to take exercise, but hung about the stables, smoking his pipe all day long, without being of much use. But he was an old, faithful servant, and Mr. Dillon could not bear the thought of turning the poor old fellow out on the world when he was almost past his work. He had just then been absent for a day or two on his master's business, and was now returned.

"Av you plase, sir," said Pat, coming to the door and standing with the handle in his hand. "Tony Whigarald is outside, an' would be glad to see your honour."

"And I shall be glad to see him. Send him here, Pat, as soon as he has had his breakfast."

In a short time Tony Fitzgerald made his appearance in the doorway, making a profound reverence when he saw Miss Dillon; which reverence consisted in pulling down his front lock of hair, and scraping the carpet with his right foot.

"Have you had breakfast, Tony?" inquired Grace kindly.

"Sure enough I have, miss; long life to you! Lashins an' lavins; bread an' butther, an' tay, an' could mate. Success to Kitty MacCall! 'tis herself can handle the carvin'-knife an' fork in great style intirely, an' cut a plate ov vittles that would do your heart good to see, let alone to ate. Faix, Miss Grace, you couldn't be more *fláhulouch** yourself, at the head ov the table, an' the dish out furnint you. 'Tis the thruth I'm tellin' you, miss."

"I am very glad that Kitty treated you so well, after your long ride this morning," said Grace, with a pleasant smile. "Someone told me lately, that Kitty and you were so friendly that we may be prepared for a wedding in Castle Cloyne one of these days."

"You're welcome to your game, miss," said poor old Tony.

"But seriously, Kitty would make you an excellent wife; and though I should be sorry to lose such a good cook, still I would not stand in her way if she got a good husband."

"Folly on, Miss Granua, folly on! Fake an' sure, you're a mighty pleasant young lady, so you are, God

* *Fláhulouch*—plentiful.

bless you ! " cried the ancient lover, with a shamefaced look that was exceedingly ludicrous, at the same time delighted that Grace thought his powers of fascination were still equal to captivate the heart of such a blooming young woman as Kitty MacCall.

" Come in, man, and sit down, and let us hear how you fared on your travels," said Mr. Dillon, glad of anything that would serve to break the monotony of the long day that lay before him.

In obedience to this command, Tony Fitzgerald drew a chair just inside the door, and sat down on its extreme edge; for he did not think it would be respectful towards Miss Dillon if he were to settle himself in any more comfortable position. With his old hat in one hand, and a stout blackthorn stick in the other, he hemmed and cleared his throat a good many times before he gave an account of himself.

" Why thin, Mr. Dillon, sir, I have nothing to tell you but the hoighth ov good news intirely. Ah ! sure I needn't be at the throuble ov dhrawin' down the wothers on your honour's own estate at all, for ov coorse we're sure ov every man Jack ov them. I wouldn't demane either you or myself be axin' any wan ov 'em what way he'd wote, for all the money in the Bank of Ireland, let alone all the cotton in

Manchester, wouldn't bribe wan ov them to sell the pass."

"Well, indeed, Tony, I wouldn't do my own people such an injustice as to think any of them would vote against me. I never deserved it from them."

"Sure enough, sir, you never did; there's nothing at all surer than that. An' the min on the Beech Hill estate will folly you to the poll, every man ov 'em; an' what great admiration is that, when Mr. Wilson, their landlord, is to be your proposher, an' his daughter to be married wan ov these days to Masther Hy'cinth? Never fear, but 'tis himself that will keep a sharp eye on 'em, for fear they'd be bought over by the cotton-spinner's money. Mr. Wilson I mane, sir."

"Oh, I'm as sure of the Beech Hill tenants as I am of my own; I'm not afraid of them at all. But, Tony, the Mount Shannon men will all go, I fear, with Mr. Egglestone."

"A good many ov 'em will, sir, I'm in dhread, bad cess to them; but I gave some yellow boys to the wives ov some ov 'em, on the sly, an' that gives us about ten or a dozen wotes here an' there."

"But that was bribery, man," cried Mr. Dillon, pretending to be much displeased.

"Eyeh! so itself, sir. Sure everything is fair in love an' war, an' if we come in at the head ov the poll, the devil may care about the bribery. Aren't the other side bribin' horse an' fut, as fast as ever they can pelt, an' why would we be behindhand wid 'em? We're not so poor as that we'd hould back ov spindin' the money, o' purpose to plase *thim*," and Tony tossed his head to express great contempt for "the cotton-spinner."

At this moment Pat made his appearance once more, and to the great surprise of Mr. Dillon, clad not in his ordinary clothes, but in his best suit, which was never worn but when he went abroad, or when there was company to dinner at Castle Cloyne. He stood at the door, hat in hand, and though at no time remarkable for bashfulness, yet now he seemed as if trying to get his courage up to a certain point.

"What do you want?" asked his master.

"Well, sir, I just came to tell you that I'm goin' to the election, an' to ax if your honour had any commands?"

"Going to the election!" exclaimed Mr. Dillon in the greatest amazement; "going to the election! Sir, you shall do nothing of the kind. Go back to your business, and let me have no more of this nonsense."

"An' who's to look afther Masther Hy'cinth, I'd

like to know, if I'm not there to do it? Begorra, 'tis kilt an' murdhered intirely he'll be by thim villyans, if I'm not alongside ov him to take his part."

"He will do much better without you. It is nearly time to send up luncheon, and you had better go to your pantry and see about it. Let me have no more of your impudence."

Mr. Dillon's tone and manner were so peremptory, that Pat saw he had no earthly chance of getting permission to set off, so he retreated without further parley. But, though some time elapsed, he did not return to announce luncheon as usual.

"Oh, by the lord Harry! the impudent rascal has given us the slip, and gone off to the election!" exclaimed Mr. Dillon in great wrath.

"Well, sir, I wouldn't put it beyant his father's son to do that same," said the old man, who had a perfect recollection of Barney Flanagan and his daring exploits.

"I hardly think that Pat would do such a foolish thing," said Grace in her soft voice.

"'Tis the very thing that he *would* do," cried Mr. Dillon, who by this time had worked himself into a great passion. "I know him well, and a greater scoundrel than he is, is not on the face of the earth. I often prophesied that he'd come to the

gallows, and they who will live to see it will know that I took his right measure. He's a desperate blackguard!"

"Go look for Pat, and send him here at once," said Grace to Tony. "Tell him we are waiting for luncheon."

Tony Fitzgerald obeyed at once, very glad to be dismissed, for he felt anything but at his ease in Miss Dillon's drawing-room. He went to look for Pat, whom he found at the gate of the back entrance, whip in hand, and mounted on Mr. Dillon's own horse, which was the very best animal in the stables. He expected to have been able to get well off before anyone would be sent in pursuit of him, but now that he was caught *in flagrante delicto,* he put on a bold face, and resolved to brazen it out.

"Arrah, where are you goin' to, man alive?" demanded Tony, breathless from haste, and amazed at the fellow's cool impudence.

"I'm goin' to the election. Sure you hard me tellin' as much to the masther, in the dhrawn'-room within," replied Pat carelessly.

"Well, an' if I did, I hard him tellin' you not to do it, at your per'l. He said that, in the hearin' ov my two ears."

"Well, I hard him too. Sure the poor ould gintleman was talkin' to himself, an' av it's the laste consolation in life to him, no wan will begridge it. Why would they?"

"An' who's to send in lunch for himself an' Miss Granua, an' attind 'em at dinner this evenin', if you're to ride off wid yourself this a way?"

"You may do it, av you like. Fake an' sure there's no wan thryin' to prevent you; sorra wan that I can see."

"Yarra, what div I know about attindin' quolity at their vittles? An' I have my own bisness to mind."

"Oh, very well. Thin you can tell Kitty MacCall, or any ov the other women in the kitchen, to do it. There's enough ov them, goodness knows. But don't go an' say, Tony Whigarald, when I'm gone, that I didn't tell you what was right for you to do, for the short time I'll be away."

"An' is it taking Tearaway, the masther's own horse, you are, you young limb ov the divil?"

"An' why not? He knows me, an' no wan will take as good care ov him as myself. An' now that I think ov it," he added reflectively, "Tearaway is in want ov a good gallop, for since the masther got this last fit of the gout, the poor baste got no exercise

to signify, an' signs on, he's gettin' too fat. Faix, Masther Hy'cinth said a'most as much to me the day before istherday."

"Pat Flanagan, you'll come to be hanged yet, surely."

"Well, if I do, you won't break your heart o' 'count of it. But all the time that I'm discoorsin' you the day is goin' by, an' if I wait any longer the fun will be all over when I get into the town. So good-bye to you, Tony Whigarald," and touching the horse with the whip he started off.

"Come back, you divil's limb!" shouted the old man at the top of his voice. "Come back, I tell you agin. My hand to you, Pat Flanagan, you'll sup sorra for this day's work. The welcome you'll get whin you come home will be your walkin' paper in the heel ov your fist, see if you don't."

"Oyeh, nabocklish!" cried the incorrigible Pat. "'Tis myself that'll be as welcome as the flowers ov May to the masther, when I come home to him wid my mouth full ov good news. Oh, be the tare ov war! 'tis I that'll be the white-headed boy thin wid himself an' Miss Grace. 'You never brought me bad news, Pat, an' you're not goin' to begin now,' that's what the ould gintleman will say to me, an' he

shakin' the very hand off ov me. Sorra word ov lie in it, Tony Whigarald."

"Be sed by me, Pat, an' come back."

"Fake an' sure, I won't. Is it to have the election goin' on, an' myself not to be in it! Arrah, get out ov my way, ould man, an' let me pass out the gate."

"Well, if you're bint on goin', lave Tearaway at home. If anything was to happen to that horse, beyant all the other horses in the stable, the masther will have your life. Oh, sorra dhrop he'll lave in you!"

"An' what good would it be to go to the election without I was dacently mounted? I couldn't take Masther Hy'cinth's part, nor let the people see that I was own man to Mr. Dillon ov Castle Cloyne, if I hadn't a good horse undher me. Is it to disgrace the family you want me to do, Tony Whigarald?"

"The masther is callin' you, Pat."

"Oyeh, so let him."

"Well, if you won't come back quietly, I'll make you," and Tony laid his hand on the horse's rein. "Come back."

"*Dioul cuss!** Clear the way out ov that, or I'll

* *Dioul cuss*—Devil a foot.

ride over you. Hurroo!" and giving Tearaway the spur, he waved his arm in triumph, while the horse dashed off so suddenly that poor old Tony was knocked down into the dirt. But that did not in the least stop the career of Mr. Pat Flanagan, who waved his whip over his head with a yell of exultation; and the horse, true to his name, tore away, leaving the prostrate old groom soon far behind.

"I hope the foolish boy will bring the horse back safe, an' his own four bones into the bargain," said poor Tony, picking himself up, having fortunately sustained no greater injury than a large sprinkling of dust and dirt. "'Tis thrue for the masther, he has his father's blood in him, an' he's every inch ov him his father's son. He has a great sperit, surely, an' sure the world knows he didn't stale that, but got it where he had the best right to it. Maybe 'tis on a dure he'll be brought home to us, like his father wanst on a time—who knows? An' Tearaway may be dhruv by him into the very thick ov the rookawn, an' get his leg broke, so that he'll have to be shot. An' if he do itself, what does Pat care?" And muttering these, and similar disjointed sentences, the old man went into the stable to scrape the mud from his clothes, before he presented himself to Mr. Dillon to give an account of the affair.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NOMINATION DAY.

> Come, we'll inform them
> Of our proceedings here; in the market place
> I know they do attend us.
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

A LITTLE before two o'clock on the first day of the election, Hyacinth Dillon rode into the county town in gallant array at the head of the Castle Cloyne tenantry. A great number of these were freeholders, prepared, as a matter of course, to record their votes for their landlord; and a great many more had no votes at all, but came to swell the *cortége* and make a show for "the honour of the old family." They were all of them well mounted, well dressed, and looking what they really were, a respectable, sturdy body of yeomen, who were in no degree actuated by coercion, but came voluntarily to exercise their privilege on the hustings

in favour of a landlord who was well worthy of it. At one side of young Dillon rode Mr. Wilson, of Beech Hill, who was to be his father's proposer, and at the other was Terry Macnamara, who was to second the nomination. The streets of the old town were very narrow, and crowded with people, consequently the cavalcade was obliged to proceed very slowly on the way to the court-house, where the opening of the drama was to be enacted. As they rode along at walking pace, they saw that the windows at each side of the street were filled with spectators, mostly of the gentler sex, a good many of them friends or acquaintances of the three gentlemen who rode abreast at the head of the cavalcade. The male portion of the spectators smiled and nodded recognition to them as they passed along, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and looked distractingly beautiful in the gorgeous toilettes, that were all evidently got up for the occasion. There was not a shadow of doubt as to which of the candidates was the popular favourite, most especially with the women of all classes. How could it be otherwise, when they looked on the handsome, bright-looking young fellow who represented his father, and who managed his horse with much grace, though his right hand was incessantly employed in raising

his hat to acknowledge the vociferous welcome that greeted him from every side? If the ladies had no votes, they had plenty of enthusiasm; and, to do them justice, they availed themselves of the latitude that is allowed at election time, to manifest their sympathy in the most unequivocal manner. Nor were the "faithful commons" who thronged the streets a whit less demonstrative than their betters. They shouted, they flung their hats into the air, and unlike the gentry, who contented themselves with silent pantomime, they gave their opinions aloud pretty freely, as the party from Castle Cloyne passed slowly along.

"Three cheers, boys, for the ould stock, for the brave ould family, that stuck to their religion through thick an' thin, an' wor always to the fore whenever they wor wanted!"

"Can any ov ye tell us where was the cotton man an' his spinnin' jinny, when the Dillons wor fightin' at the Boyne?"

"Ah! sure you don't mane to forget Fontenoy, where a Dillon was kilt at the head ov his regiment?"

"God bless you, Masther Hy'cinth! 'Tis yourself that's the illigant fine young man, every inch ov you; an' happy is the woman that'll be able to put her *comehether* on you."

"Oh, plase goodness, he'll get a *sonuher* * yet; an' why not? Sure he hasn't his match in all Ireland ground."

"Blood alive, boys! where's the spinnin' man at all? If he dars to show his nose here to-day, we'll sind him spinnin' back to Manchesther, to make baffity at a pinny-farthing a yard."

This sally, which was evidently considered very clever, was received with a roar of laughter.

Up to this, everything had gone on well and peaceably, but just as the Dillon party had arrived within sight of the court-house, the public tranquillity was interrupted by a very unexpected incident. This unpleasant interruption was caused by the appearance of Mr. Pat Flanagan, who was determined to exhibit both himself and his steed to the greatest possible advantage. On coming up with the party, he had prudently remained a little in the rear, as he did not wish to be seen by Hyacinth, who would bring him to a strict account for being there without his master's permission. However, when they entered the town, he knew that Hyacinth would have something else to do than thinking of him; and taking courage from this, he pressed forward, no longer

* *Sonuher*—A good wife.

content to remain modestly in the background. As they proceeded, he got more excited by the noise and uproar around, and, urged on by his own reckless vanity, he gave Tearaway the spur, just a little, to excite his mettle. The horse was no way slow to answer this unmistakable hint, but, as the crowd was very dense, he could not get forward, and had to content himself with rearing on his hind legs to the terror of the people on foot, who could not get out of the way. At the side of the narrow street, just at the kerbstone, were a number of small tables ranged along, and covered with apples, gingerbread, and other cheap wares likely to find customers among the country people. One of those tables was right in front of Tearaway when he felt the spur, and the old woman who sat behind it became so terrified that she raised a loud cry of alarm. This sudden noise, full in his ears, frightened the horse, that, unable either to recede or go forward through the crowd, settled the difficulty in his own way by coming down on the little table with a heavy crash, overturning the unfortunate old woman, with her wares, into the dirt, the last being so trampled by his hoofs that not a trace of their original shape or substance could be discerned.

If the principal object of Pat Flanagan in coming

to the election was to create a sensation, it must be owned that he had fully succeeded. Up to this point all had been fair sailing, but now a scene of the greatest uproar and confusion took place. The other horses took fright, and following the example of the unlucky Tearaway, reared and plunged, causing the greatest alarm through the narrow, densely-packed street, and it required the most dexterous management on the part of their riders to keep them from starting off at full gallop through the crowd. There was something so ridiculously ludicrous in the whole affair, that when Pat rose from the ground where he had been thrown among the *débris* of the poor huckster's little table, and caught his horse by the bridle, he was greeted by ironical cheers and roars of laughter from every side. High above it all, however, rose the loud lamentations of the poor old woman, who, more frightened than hurt, stood beside the ruins of her poor stock-in-trade, and bewailed her loss with a vehemence and volubility that only increased the general amusement, without eliciting any sympathy for herself, or regret for the ruin of her small wares.

"Oh, vo, vo! Isn't this poor thratement for a lone widda woman, that has nothing to keep the life in her heart these bad times but her little industhry!"

she bawled out in her loudest tones. "That table an' what was on it was all I had to dipind on to get the bit an' sup for the week, to say nothing ov my lodgin' money, that's ninepence-ha'pinny as I'm a sinner. Oh, millia murther! I'm kilt an' ruinated horse an' fut; an' that I may never die in sin, if I have as much as wan copper to buy me the bit ov tobaccy, let alone the grain o' tay, to comfort my poor ould heart this blessed night. Oh, yerra, neighbours! let ye all look at me, wid all I had in the wide world med smithereens ov out fornent ye!"

"What do you mane, you ould rattletrap, be makin' such a row for nothing at all?" cried the irrepressible Pat, in no way abashed by the consequences of his *escapade*. "I wouldn't give the ashes out ov my pipe for all your thrumpery, if it was twice as much. Erra, hould your whisht! What impidence you have, to be annoyin' the gintlemin, an' they on their way to the Coort House!"

"Why thin, neighbours! d'ye hear him? The blaggard that has me fairly murthered without judge or jury, an' has the face to ballyrag me afthèrwards; the dirty lick-plate! Och mavrone! I'm broke, horse an' fut!"

Here a person in the crowd, who evidently was

one of the opposite party, cried with a loud voice: "Down with the Dillons!"

"An' down wid you, an' all your dirty breed!" shouted a man near the last speaker. "You infernal ruffin! If I hear another word, crooked or straight, out of your ugly puss, I'll be afther sinding a few ov your teeth ov a message down your throat."

"More power to you, Dan Murphy! Stand to your gun, man alive. Smash his nose to remind him that he's to have betther manners next time; an' when he looks in the glass he won't forget to remimber it. Aye, in throth!"

"Eyeh! where would a poor excuse ov a man like that, larn manners? Sure he's only a tailor on the loose for to-day, just to sthretch his legs. There wouldn't be much glory in fightin' wid the likes ov *him*."

This last sally was greeted with great laughter by the crowd.

However, the tailor was not without his own backers among the bystanders. Hats were pulled down firmly over the brow; sticks were flourished in a way that was ominously suggestive; and there was every prospect of a free fight in the narrow, crowded street, which would doubtless have ended with the usual amount of broken heads, only for the presence of mind and *savoir faire* of Hyacinth

Dillon. With his most genial voice and winning smile he called out to the old woman, and asked her what was the cost of the damaged goods, professing himself willing to pay her their full value.

"Long life to your honour, sir," she replied, greatly mollified. "The goods cost me half-a-crown istherday night, for I had to buy 'em fresh in regard ov the great hate; but I'd be sure to double my profit, an' more agin, before this day was out. An' my little table an' stool that's in smithereens out fornent you, Mr Dillon, wor worth a couple ov shillin's more; aye, in throth, if the bargain was betune two brothers, they wouldn't sell for a pinny less. That the harm ov the year mayn't pass me, gintlemen dear, if it's a lie I'm tellin' ye!"

"Well, my good woman, I don't doubt you in the least. I am sure you were a good deal frightened; but as for your furniture and wares, this, I think, will pay you for their loss." And as he spoke, young Dillon took a sovereign out of his pocket, and tossed it towards her with a pleasant smile.

At the sight of the gold piece the poor old huckster was almost stupefied from amazement. It was a long time since she had known herself to be the owner of a golden sovereign, a sum that, even at her own valuation, was far more than the worth of the poor mer

chandise she had lost. She clutched the coin eagerly in her hand, and, falling on her knees in the street, poured forth her thanks for the gift, and blessings on the giver, as loudly and volubly as she had before bewailed the destruction of her extempore shop.

"Long life to you, Masther Hy'cinth," shouted one of the popular party. "'Tis yourself, surely, that has the open hand an' the feelin' heart for the poor an' the dissolute!"

"Fake an' sure, 'twas no loss to poor ould Joan that she sat in the sthreet to-day, an' got that little upset. 'Tis himself that's a Dillon every inch ov him, an' he has their free hand, as well as their handsome face. *Gondhoutha.*" *

"The ould stock an' the ould blood for ever, an' the ould religion to the back ov 'em."

"*Sonuher* to you, Masther Hy'cinth, darlin'; what you'll get yet, never fear."

"Yarra, lave off your prate, honest woman, an' don't be delayin' us here all day. Make way, av you plase, for the gintlemin to pass on to the Coort House, where the sheriff is waitin' wid a power ov compliments for the ould family ov Castle Cloyne."

Tranquillity having been restored through the tact of young Dillon, the procession of which he was

* *Gondhoutha*—Without doubt.

leader again moved on in the direction of the Court House. In a few moments it emerged from the narrow street into a square situated in the very centre of the town, from which the different streets branched off at the four sides. In the middle of this square was the Court House. The open space all round it was thronged with people, and from the streets and lanes leading to it, vast numbers kept pouring into it from all parts of the country. The crowd was so immense that it was literally a sea of heads, so densely packed together that if a pin fell, it should be on some person's hat, even though the hats were in perpetual motion, and kept surging and swaying from side to side. They were all laughing, talking, and bandying jokes from one to the other, and as they saw the Dillons slowly advancing, they good-humouredly tried to make way for them.

But it was not destined that the peace so lately restored was to be of long duration. The fuel was quite ready, and it only required a match to set it in a blaze. Exactly as the Dillons arrived at the Court House by one avenue, Mr. Egglestone and his supporters came from the opposite side. The rival parties met unfortunately in the centre of the densely-crowded square. The Englishman was fully as well and numerously attended as was his oppo-

nent, and his followers were of a higher and more respectable class, for the Conservative landlords had rallied round him with all the authority and influence that they could command. They mustered in great force, partly to afford the candidate of their choice all the moral support their presence could give, and partly to see that their tenants, who were brought up in gangs, should vote in the direction that had been pointed out to them.

"This is very unfortunate," said Mr. Wilson, of Beech Hill, a grave, white-haired old gentleman, reining in his horse. "I had hoped that one or other of the two parties would have arrived at the Court House before the other. God grant that there will not be bad work here to-day!"

"Pray don't make yourself uneasy," said Terry Macnamara coolly. "There is a strong force of police here, and beyond a few cracked skulls and broken bones, there will be no great harm done. When things go beyond that, the police will strike in."

"I don't like the aspect of affairs at all," said Mr. Wilson, shaking his head and looking very grave. "I wish the business was well over, and that we were all sitting down to dinner at Beech Hill. Have you your men well in hand, Hyacinth, and can you depend on them to keep the peace?"

"There is one of them I will not answer for at all, and that is the impudent scamp that caused the row a while ago. My father was quite right in forbidding him to come here to-day, but I suppose the fellow came off without leave in the end. It is just like what he would do. I was never more amazed than when I saw him a few moments since, and mounted too, on my father's hunter, the very best horse in the Castle Cloyne stables. Of course, he stole him away without leave, for I think my father would hardly lend Tearaway to me, not to talk of letting Pat Flanagan ride him to the election. But I promise you, that when I get home, I'll lay my whip on his carcase to such good purpose, that he won't be able to get on horseback for a month to come."

"Three cheers for the ould family ov Castle Cloyne!" cried the audacious Pat, forgetting in his excitement the wholesome fear of his young master that had kept him up to this in the rear, "an' down wid baffity makers an' spinnin' jinnies!"

"Down wid the pot wallopper!" screamed a voice in the rear of Mr. Egglestone; "an' down wid the rebel Papists!"

"Who sould the pass to Vasey Whigarald at the election of twinty-eight?" bawled another.

"I'll tell you that, if you want to know. It was the Tory landlords, every mother's son ov 'em."

"Boys, remimber yer counthry an' yer religion, an' don't sell yer sowls for filthy lucre."

"Boys, don't mind this *rámash,* but think ov yer wives an' little childher at home, an' stand by yer landlords!"

By this time the confusion and uproar were perfectly indescribable. The belligerents were no longer satisfied with shouting abuse at each other, but proceeded to more active measures. Very soon, rotten eggs, dead kittens, and even stones and brickbats were flying from side to side in blinding confusion. Then the sticks were uplifted, but fortunately owing to the density of the crowd, there was not room for them to have full scope, and all the mischief that was done was battering down some scores of hats, and inflicting thereby some black eyes and bloody noses. Shouts, yells of pain, and the fiercest imprecations resounded on all sides, while the closely-packed masses of people swayed to and fro in the greatest excitement, like the waves of a tumultuous sea. But the battle did not last long, for the police, in a compact body, made their appearance in a few minutes. It was not an easy task for them to force their way to where the combat

was raging most fiercely, but their very appearance on the scene of action was sufficient. Each party was fain to recede, leaving it a drawn battle. Before it was quite over, however, Mr. Egglestone was struck in the cheek by a brickbat, and rushed into the Court House with the blood streaming down the front of his shirt.

The uproar within the Court House was almost as great as it was outside in the square. It was filled to suffocation almost, by a better class, but all talking and shouting at the top of their lungs, so that the proceedings took place for the most part in dumb show. Mr. Egglestone was proposed to the electors of the county as a fit and proper person to represent them in the Imperial Parliament, but the noise was so terrific that not a word that the gentleman who proposed, or the one who seconded him said, could be heard. Mr. Dillon, of Castle Cloyne, was next proposed by Mr. Wilson, of Beech Hill, and his nomination was seconded by Terry Macnamara, who were both received with several rounds of Kentish fire. Their efforts to gain a hearing met with no better success, and they were obliged to sit down after some moments spent in dumb show.

Then Mr. Egglestone stood up to address the assembly, and was received by a perfect storm of

hisses, cat-calls, and similar manifestations of the popular displeasure. He was as pale as marble, and this was made still more apparent by the contrast between the deathly hue of his face and the red blood that dyed his shirt-front; but he stood his ground firmly, holding his hat in one hand, while with the other he wiped away from time to time, the drops that oozed out from the wound in his cheek. He was told by a hundred voices to sit down, but he would not do so, being fully determined to obtain a hearing. After some short time spent in this sort of pantomime, Father O'Rafferty, who stood at Hyacinth Dillon's right hand, stepped forward and addressed the people.

"Boys, fair play is a jewel, all the world over. This gentleman has done nothing that should make ye refuse to hear him. It is neither manly nor straightforward, not to permit him to answer for himself. I don't intend that ye should vote for Mr. Egglestone by any means; I'd be very sorry that ye did anything of the kind." This was said in a mock whisper, and with a droll wink that set everyone laughing. "But it won't do my friend Dominic Dillon the least injury, or prejudice his election in any way, to treat his opponent courteously and fairly. And I hope that he *will* be so treated,

and get what everyone is entitled to, a full and patient hearing."

"Three cheers for Father O'Rafferty!"—this from the lower end of the Court House—"and for his sake let us listen to what this spinning-jenny man has to say."

Sufficient quiet was now established to enable Mr. Egglestone to speak with some chance of being heard. He was listened to in grim silence, and when he was done there was a feeble attempt at a cheer, made by his own party, but it soon died out. Then Hyacinth Dillon, as the representative of his father—who it was said was confined to his room by a very severe attack of gout—came forward, to address the electors on his behalf. As he stood before them bare-headed, and in the flower of early manhood, graceful in person, and with a face of almost feminine beauty, he was received by thunders of applause, that were renewed again and again. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs from the galleries, and men flourished their hats from the body of the house, in a manner scarcely less enthusiastic. He, too, had to wait for some time before he could obtain a hearing; but the delay only served to exhibit to greater advantage the handsome young fellow who, hat in hand, and a bright smile on his face, stood awaiting their pleasure. And when

at last he was allowed to speak, he was constantly interrupted by some flattering or encouraging observation, or by rounds of cheers, that sounded very pleasantly in his ears.

He began by apologising for the unavoidable absence of his father, which he hoped the electors would not impute to indifference or disrespect to them. He then modestly set forth the claims that his family had on them, not forgetting to remind them of the great number of his ancestors who had sacrificed so much for conscience' sake in the old persecuting times.

"Hurrah for Fontenoy, an' for James Dillon who died there at the head of his regiment!"

"Happily, the days were past," he continued, "when the gentry of the country, and the flower of its people, were compelled to choose between the duty they owed to their religion, and their love for their native land; and all Irishmen, no matter what their creed or station might be, were now equal in the eye of the law. None of the Dillons had a truer love for religion and country than his father had, who had no earthly doubt of being, through their support and influence, returned by a large majority to represent them in the Imperial Parliament."

"Three cheers for the old house of Castle Cloyne!"

"Three cheers for the fighting Dillons!"

"One more for the Dillon who fought at the Boyne, and at Aughrim; an' down wid the foreigner an' his spinning jinny!"

"As the day was now far gone, he would not trespass any longer on their kindness, conscious as he was how very inadequately he could represent his father."

When the loud applause that followed this speech had subsided, the High Sheriff called for a show of hands, and nearly all present raised their hands in favour of Dillon, while those who declared in favour of Egglestone were very few. The latter gentleman then demanded a poll, and the High Sheriff appointed the earliest day allowed by the law, for it to take place. The proceedings being then over for that day, the people began to disperse. The rival candidates and their friends departed on their respective ways, and the Court House was left once more in profound silence.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEECH HILL.

"Le bonheur lui-même n'est pas grande chose, mais les avenues sont délicieuses."

MARMONTEL.

WHEN the principal business of the day was over, Hyacinth set out in search of Pat Flanagan, determined to order that worthy to return immediately to Castle Cloyne, as a very small punishment for his disobedience and misconduct. Besides, he could not tell what further mischief might be wrought by Pat's overflowing good spirits, and exuberant zeal for the honour of the family. In his heart Hyacinth was not greatly displeased, for youth will sympathise with youth, and "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." In his opinion Pat's *escapade* was a fault on the right side; but, nevertheless, discipline must be observed and the line drawn somewhere. But the valour of "Misther

Dillon's own man" was blended with some small share of discretion; for as soon as he saw that the chief business of the day was over, and that the immense crowd that had filled the town in the morning was gradually dispersing, he prudently followed that example, and took himself off, being both afraid and ashamed to face his young master. He was afraid, too, that if they met, Hyacinth would order him at once to return with his father's hunter, which was a thing that did not at all suit Pat's programme. He had a cousin living within a mile or two of the town, and he resolved to go off to him and remain at his place until the election would be over, taking of course Tearaway with him, for he would not let the horse out of his own care. He hoped, too, that as his young master would not meet him in town during the intervening time, he would think he had returned home with the horse. As he said to his cousin, in the course of the evening, when they were smoking their pipes together: "If I let Tearaway out ov my sight, an' that anything happened him, or that he was stole, o' 'count ov borryin' him without as much as 'by your leave' to the masther or Masther Hy'cinth, begor, I'd have nothing for it but to fly the counthry, an' make for forrin parts. The divil a less!"

In the cool of the afternoon, Terry Macnamara and Hyacinth Dillon rode home to Beech Hill with Mr. Wilson. It was a pretty place, just outside the town, and its peace and repose were very welcome after the noise and turmoil of the crowded town. Mr. Wilson rode with them, and it was settled that his house was to be their head-quarters for a few days until the close of the election, as the distance to Castle Cloyne was too great to permit of their returning to it that evening.

Mr. Wilson, of Beech Hill—as he loved to be called—was a man of large fortune, one of a class that is known as *les nouveaux riches*. Although holding himself the position of a gentleman, his family and relations were all inferior in the social scale. Neither he nor they could be called old gentry like the Macnamaras and the Dillons, who could trace their pedigree not for years, but for centuries. He did not possess the luxury of ancestors, at least not any that Ulster King-at-arms could take official notice of, nor could he go farther back than his grandfather. Fortunately, however, for himself he had had a grandfather, the man from whom he derived his wealth, who began life as an errand-boy, and ended it as the senior partner of the house the floors of which he had once swept. His son was well educated and ambitious,

and the grandson, who was a great improvement on the other two, married into a good old county family, and, on the strength of the wife's respectability and his own wealth, held his head as high as if he had been descended from the Plantagenets. He was a quiet kind of man, though rather pompous, and very proud of his money, which he esteemed beyond everything else in the world; and this was not surprising considering what money had done for him, without aid whatever from good birth or high connections, or brilliant intellect, which goes beyond them all. Money, and money alone, had raised up his family from their original obscurity, and placed it in society, and on an equality with men whose ancestors had come into Ireland with Strongbow, or who had been lords of the soil there "when Brian smote down the Danes." But though fully sensible of the value of money, he made no ignoble use of it, for he lived in good style on his own property, assisted the local charities with liberality, and practised a hospitality that was above criticism, for it was neither mean on one side nor ostentatious on the other. Respectable in his habits, and inoffensive in manner and language, he was like the hare in the fable, and "had many friends," as the rich and prosperous are sure to have, unless they

violate good taste or public opinion in some very outrageous way.

Mr. Wilson's family consisted of only one child, a daughter, the sole heiress of his large fortune. Like Grace Dillon, she was unfortunately motherless, but, unlike her, she was gifted with great personal beauty. Young, lovely, and an heiress, it may well be said that she had many admirers; some of them admiring her fortune, and others, with proverbial Irish gallantry, admired her fine person still more. But, with one exception, she regarded them all with the greatest indifference, and that exception was in favour of Hyacinth Dillon. The young heir of Castle Cloyne loved the beautiful girl with all his heart and soul; for him there was but one woman in the world, and that woman was Caroline Wilson.

In this instance, strange to say, the course of true love had hitherto run very smoothly. Those two young people lived in an enchanted palace, within whose precincts summer always reigned, where the flowers never faded, and where the birds' songs were a perpetual chorus of exulting joy. No serpent lurked in the Eden of their love. No stern parent, who had never loved himself, or loved so long ago that he had lost all memory of its fragrance, and could not sympathise with youth, or the fresh, bright

hopes that are its priceless dower, was there to forbid their love, or separate them with a masterful and pitiless hand. Mr. Dillon and Mr. Wilson were both aware of the mutual affection of their children, and, so far from opposing the engagement they had entered into, they fully approved and sanctioned it.

This complaisance on the part of the two fathers did not proceed altogether from pure affection for their children, or anxiety to secure their happiness, but from much more ambitious and worldly motives. The first consideration with both was in the circumstance that the greater part of Mr. Wilson's property lay side by side with that of Castle Cloyne, and that the two, if joined together, would lie in a ring fence, the fairest and most compact estate in the whole county. The two old gentlemen were at one on this point, and, after many consultations, they came to the conclusion that it would be the greatest pity in the world that the estates should be separated.

To be sure, there were a few minor objections, but when all parties were agreed on the major points, agreement in the minor ones was sure to follow as a matter of course. Mr. Wilson knew that the Dillons owed a great deal of money, but his knowledge on the matter was rather vague, for he thought they only owed some thousands, when

in truth the estate of Castle Cloyne was mortgaged up to its full value. The large sum of ready money he would give his daughter on her marriage would, he calculated, not only clear off all the encumbrances, but leave a handsome surplus sufficient to repair the old house, and furnish it newly from the cellar to the garret. With all the ambition of a *parvenu,* he wished his child should marry into an old family like the Dillons', whose blood was untainted, and whose antecedents were faultless. The very quality that he lacked himself he envied and admired in them. His grandchildren would be Dillons, and with the name would inherit the prestige and the grand old traditions of the race.

But on his side Dominic Dillon did not regard the projected marriage with unmixed complacency. He felt, in truth, not a little sore and discontented at the thought of his only son and his heir being married to a woman whose grandfather had begun life as an errand-boy, whose wealth had been made in trade, and whose blood was, in his estimation, only the merest puddle. Had the Wilsons a coat of arms at all? he asked himself, or if they had, where did they get it, or from what respectable family did they pilfer it? Wilson was a quiet, gentlemanly man, who knew how to bear himself well and prudently with

all classes of men, and Caroline was a beautiful, accomplished girl, and as far as he could see a good girl too, but *his son*, the last Dillon of Castle Cloyne, was, he thought, well entitled to marry a woman who had not only money in her pocket, but good blood in her veins.

All this, and much more to the same purpose, was said by Mr. Dillon to his *fidus Achates*, Terry Macnamara, as they sat in the open window of the dining-room in Castle Cloyne, one fine evening in summer. Dinner was over, and there was a small round table beside them, on which were two glasses of good old port, and some fine ripe fruit freshly gathered.

"I can't say I think your view of the question is either a good or a wise one," said Terry, when Mr. Dillon, with a rueful face, had for the twentieth time gone over all his objections to the match. "Her money is exactly what we are most in need of at this stage of affairs, and not her blood, so that her want of that commodity does not make much difference. Of course it would be better if she had it; but as she hasn't, there is no more to be said. We can't have everything we like in this world. We can afford to do without ancestors for her, when we have so many and to spare on yours. Hyacinth has the blood and Caroline has the fat, and so the pair are pretty well

matched. Wilson wants to give his daughter rank and position by getting her married into an old county family, and he is satisfied to pay well for his ambition; and you want to redeem the old acres, and to do that you must pay too, in the sacrifice of a share of your pride. Each gives what he can spare, and gains all that he wants, and that, I think, is a fair reasonable bargain."

"All the same, Terry, I never would give my consent to such a marriage, only that Hyacinth loves the girl, and I could not bear to cross him, or give him a sore heart in the beginning of his life."

"You're about right there, and have used the very best argument in favour of the match. He is a fine lad, and it would be a grievous thing to break his spirit or grieve his young heart on account of the phantom of your absurd old family pride. He is your only son; take care not to pull the string too tightly by which you still hold him in your hand. You were young once yourself, Dominic, and you married the woman you loved, and were very happy with her. Don't, for heaven's sake, condemn your son to a life less happy than was your own lot. This consideration alone ought to settle the matter, even if worldly prudence and sound common sense were not already in the scale."

And it did settle it with Mr. Dillon, though it is very doubtful if he would have consented to haul down his flag so soon, had his affection for his son not been seconded by the splendid dower that Miss Wilson was to bring with her. Dominic Dillon was no fool, although he sometimes did very foolish things; and he could not but see that Terry's arguments were wise and sensible. So he not only gave his consent to the marriage, but he did so with a good grace; and it was arranged that it should take place in another year, when the young lady should have attained her majority.

On the day of the nomination there was to be a large dinner-party at Beech Hill, composed for the most part of those country gentlemen who had come from a distance to give the support of their presence to Mr. Dillon. There was not much conversation during dinner, for the guests were all too hungry for anything but strict attention to the good things before them. After dinner the discourse all turned on the business of the election and the proceedings of the morning, mixed up with some local news, all of which, though very interesting to the company themselves, is not of any importance to the progress of this story. As soon as he could do so without attracting observation, Hyacinth slipped

out of the room, which he could easily do as he was next the door, leaving his seniors to discuss the election, and make themselves comfortable over some good old port and prime Cork whiskey.

Miss Wilson was not in the drawing-room when he went in, but through the window he caught a glimpse of her moving about among the trees outside the house. Springing through the open window, he was in a moment at her side. Winding his arm round her slender waist, he gently led her out of sight of the dining-room windows, to where the trees were more thickly massed, and the leafy screen overhead made a fitting canopy for the idyll that always exists on earth when that charming triad, youth, beauty, and love, meet together for a brief space of time.

Caroline Wilson was a radiant blonde. In the words of Tennyson,

> She was divinely tall,
> And most divinely fair.

If she was not a patrician by birth, she was certainly one in appearance. It was no perversion of language to call her beautiful, for she was nobly formed, with a bright face crowned by an aureole of red golden hair, and eyes of so deep a blue that they vied in colour with the skies above them. She was, in truth, very beautiful, and she knew it; for what woman

that is beautiful does not know it, unless she is a fool? This knowledge made itself quite apparent in the stately carriage, in the calm, proud composure with which she met the admiring gaze with which strangers first looked at her. She was a queen in right of "sovereign beauty born," and required the full tribute of admiration that she thought was due to the surpassing loveliness of her face and form. It had been often said that Caroline's charms would be absolutely perfect if she could only seem a little less conscious of them, if she had about her more of the loving, gentle woman, and less of the flattered beauty and spoiled heiress. But Hyacinth saw no fault in his idol, no flaw, however slight, in the dainty workmanship of her composition. In his eyes she was simply perfect, the "bright particular star" that was above and beyond all other women.

Ah! how happy they were, those two, as they wandered about among the trees in the soft, sweet haze of that glorious August evening! Their future promised to be as fair and cloudless as the present; no cloud, not even as small as a man's hand, appeared to darken the horizon that stretched itself on before them serene and glad. Let age accumulate wealth, and count his money-bags with ever-increasing interest and greed, but youth and love have a gold

of their own far more precious, or rather they possess an alchemy that turns all they touch into gold; airy, unsubstantial, fleeting, but to them priceless wealth; a wealth that can neither be bought nor sold, but is their own in fee. And when youth and love abide in the same heart, there also is gladness and happiness, for to be young is to enjoy, and to love is to be happy.

But the August evening, though very lovely, is also very short, and the fast-coming darkness as well as the heavy dews warned them to retire indoors. When they entered the drawing-room, where the tea-table was set out waiting for its mistress, they found only Mr. Wilson and Terry Macnamara playing a game of backgammon at a small side-table. The other guests had all gone away, soon after dinner, as they lived in the country, and had long distances to ride before they could reach their homes.

After tea Caroline sat down to the piano, and while the two old gentlemen played their game with varying success, she performed some of the fine classical music of the German composers. She had a good ear, correct taste, and had been most carefully taught, therefore her execution was beyond what is commonly seen in an amateur. She played piece after piece, and Hyacinth turned the leaves

of her music-book, and between each there were tender whispers and soft nothings by way of interlude; all very delightful to themselves, no doubt, but which would look very silly indeed if put into print. When the two old gentlemen had finished playing, Caroline stood up from the piano, and closed the book, while still the last strain of Chopin's dreamy music floated on the air. Her father, whose taste lay more in vocal than in instrumental harmony, asked her for a song before they separated for the night, and she sat down again to the instrument, and after a tender prelude she sang some English words to a melancholy old Irish air. The words were quite as pathetic as the air, and she rendered both with much taste and feeling. It was strange that one so young and joyous should have selected so sad a song, but *les extrêmes se touchent*, and excess of happiness often has the effect of making us thoughtful and pensive, as if to remind us how transitory a thing joy is, as well as to show us that there is nothing bright, or glad, or lovely here below, that is not darkened by the shadow and the fear that are the inseparable attendants of all earthly things.

The day has waxed and waned, the night is falling,
Hushing to solemn calm the world's loud roar;
But thou wilt answer to my heart's wild calling,
No more, oh, never more!

No more wilt thou be joyful in my gladness—
Oh loved and lost!—as in the days of yore;
And, if thou couldst not soothe, wouldst share my sadness,
No more, oh, never more!

No more wilt thou with tender accents bless me,
And on my lonely heart Love's sunshine pour,
Or with thy gentle, pitying hand caress me,
No more, oh, never more!

Yearningly I stretch my arms above me,
As if to win thee from th' eternal shore;
No more shall I be loved as thou didst love me,
No more, oh, never more!

CHAPTER XX.

A CONTESTED ELECTION.

With wreaths of laurel now my brows entwine,
. . . . . The victory is mine!

POPE.

WHEN the day fixed on by the sheriff for polling the electors of the county arrived, the small old town miscalled the capital was once more the scene of the wildest excitement. Warned by what had occurred on the day of nomination, the authorities had wisely decided that the candidates and their followers should make their entry into the town, not only from different sides, but at different hours of the day. Strong bodies of police were stationed at the outskirts, whose duty it was to enforce this order in the most stringent manner. Mr. Egglestone, as he had lodgings in the town, was directed to have his people "to the fore" by nine o'clock in the morning, while

the Dillons, who for the most part had to come from a distance, were appointed to put in their appearance at ten, at which hour the polling was to commence at the several booths. By this judicious arrangement a collision between the opposite parties was avoided, and the business of the day allowed to proceed with not more than the usual amount of excitement and uproar.

For an hour or two the voting was tolerably even, and neither side could claim much advantage over the other. This nettled the great county magnates, who almost all were in favour of Mr. Egglestone, the Conservative candidate, while the middle classes, the Catholic clergy, and all whom they could influence, ranged themselves on the side of Mr. Dillon. Matters went on quietly enough until about noon, and then began the real tug of war. The landlords, who could not endure the thought of being defeated by the priests, exerted themselves to the utmost, bringing their tenants in gangs to the poll, riding at their head in proud triumph, while the rear was brought up by their stewards and bailiffs, who took care that no man fell out of the ranks, or flinched from the task assigned to him. There was very little fear, however, of much overt rebellion against landlord authority, for the greater number of those freeholders were only tenants

from year to year, and were well aware of the penalty that would surely and sternly be exacted from them, if they presumed to vote otherwise than as their landlords had directed. That penalty would be eviction! They would be deprived of their holdings, and they and their families flung penniless on the world in punishment for having obeyed their priests, rather than their landlords. Some, when they came to the poll, and saw the eye of their priest fixed on them, and heard his warning whisper bidding them to stand by the old religion and the old country, deserted their landlords, and boldly recorded their votes for Mr. Dillon, amidst the loud acclamations of the bystanders. But they who had the courage to beard their landlords to their teeth were not tenants at will, as may be well supposed, but freeholders who held their lands on lease; comfortable enough to pay their rents punctually, and who could, consequently, afford themselves the luxury of giving their votes to the priest instead of the landlord. But they were very few, comparatively speaking, who had the courage to act so independently; and when the hour of noon pealed forth from the town clock, the tide had turned in favour of Egglestone, and every moment that passed increased his majority.

"This will never do," said Terry Macnamara to

Father O'Rafferty, as they stood together in one of the booths. "The Conservatives are carrying everything before them, all along the line. Where is Hyacinth?"

"He is haranguing a crowd from the window of his own committee-rooms."

"That won't do much good *now*. There must be stronger measures, or we are lost. The landlords are going ahead of us at a slapping pace. I can't stay here any longer, but will go out to the streets, where I could do more good than I can do here. You can stay here and watch the voting."

"I think it would be better if I were the one to go into the streets," returned the priest. "I'll run round to all the public-houses, and see who are skulking there. You can take your turn when I come back; but one of us must remain here to watch the voters and inform our attorney of whatever holes can be picked in the freeholders on the other side."

"So be it," acquiesced Terry; and the priest, with a celerity that could hardly be expected in one so old and so fat, was off like a shot.

This was the moment chosen by Mr. Pat Flanagan, who up to this had remained in the background, to make what he thought was a grand *coup*. No sooner

had he seen Father O'Rafferty fairly out of the booth, than he came forward with an air of great importance, leading with great apparent care and solicitude a feeble-looking old man, who, though the weather was extremely sultry, was enveloped in a large frieze "loody," and having his head and face well wrapped up in a large woollen comforter.

"Make way there, boys, for this poor ould man, that got up out ov his sick bed, an' come a long distance besides, to vote for Mr. Dillon," cried Pat in a loud voice.

"Who are you, my man, and for whom do you vote?" asked Mr. Dillon's law agent.

"My name is Martin MacDermott, an' I come to vote for my landlord, Mr. Dillon ov Castle Cloyne," replied the man in the low weak voice of an invalid.

"Has Mr. Dillon such a tenant, and if so, is he qualified to vote?" asked Mr. Egglestone's attorney.

Mr. Dillon's agent had his own misgivings as to the real state of the case, but he kept them to himself, for his business was to secure the vote, not to disparage it, and an additional vote for his employer when hard pressed was of great value. Whether the vote was *bona fides* or not was no affair of his.

"Undoubtedly Mr. Dillon has such a tenant, and

in my mind, until my poor head is fairly addled from thinkin'," said the weary girl with a sigh. "But it all comes to wan thing in the end."

"An' what is that, eroo?"

"I must sell the land."

"Sell the land!" exclaimed Mrs. Clancy in a voice of the greatest consternation, and astonishment, "sell the land! Oh, queen ov Heaven! did any wan ever hear the like?"

"I'm as sorry myself, aunt, as you are, but what can I do?"

"What can you do, is it? Eyeh! what would you do, but just what I'm tellin' you? Let wan ov my boys manage for you till Shrovetide, an' then marry some decent, honest man, that'll have a thrifle ov money. You'll have the land an' he'll have the *arrighidh*,* an' I'd like to know what's to prevent ye both from bein' very happy together. That's what you're to do, an' a good sensible thing it will be."

The poor girl sighed, and as she did so, her hand came involuntarily in contact with the broken sixpence that lay concealed in her bosom.

"Sell the land, inagh! Why, Oonagh, you must be cract, to think ov it even. It is the best farm on

* *Arrighidh*—Money.

Mr. Dillon's estate, for the size ov it, an' you talk ov it just the same as if it was only a cabbage garden, or an acre of bog."

"I'm just as fond of the place as yourself, but it is in debt, an' the debt must be paid. Sure you know well that Mr. Dillon must be paid his rint, an' where is that to be got if I don't sell the place? As for marryin' a man just for the sake ov his money, 'tisn't a thing that I could ever bring my mind to. An' well as I love Ballycross, I'd far sooner sell it than sell myself."

"Oh, holy Saint Bridget! did ever any wan hear the like since the world began? Oonagh MacDermott, you're out ov your mind, that what's you are, an' if you don't show more sinse and raison than what you're doin' now, I'll have you sint to the madhouse in Limerick, until this mad fit is well taken out ov you."

Oonagh smiled at this ridiculous threat.

"You think I wouldn't do it," said Mrs. Clancy in great wrath; "see if I don't! It would be hard on me, I own, to have people say madness was in my family, in regard ov my two little girls that aren't preferred yet, but I'd sooner do it than let you make such a world's wondher ov yourself. Och mavrone! was there ever such a heart-scalded poor woman as what I am this day!" and covering her face with

her apron, she rocked herself back, and forward in a paroxysm of the wildest grief.

"Dear aunt, I can't bear to see you frettin' like this," said Oonagh, rising, and laying her hand softly on Mrs. Clancy's shoulder. "Sure if you'd only hear to raison, you'd see it is the best thing that I can do. I can't bear to see you so vexed, but all the same, I'd like to give everyone his due, an' not let any wan say he was a loser by my good, honest father."

"Don't spake to me, Oonagh MacDermott! Don't come anear me, I tell you! Oh, vo, vo! Did I ever think I'd live to see such a black, woful day! To see the splindid, fine farm, that belonged to my father, an' his father before him, an' that they wor so proud ov, an' the fine slated house on it that I was born in, going for a song, an' I obleeged to stand by, an' let it go. 'Tis for my sins, surely, that I'm condimned to pass through such a fiery furnish—what else?"

Oonagh waited patiently until this burst of passion would subside. When it did so after some moments, she sat down again, and resumed the conversation with her usual composure of manner, and gentleness of voice, as if there had not been such a stormy interruption to it.

"You see, aunt, there's nearly two years' rint due ov the land, an' where am I to make out that much money, if I don't sell it? The masther, I own, was very indulgent, an' patient wid us, but you know that wouldn't go on always. He has his own calls, an' he's not a rich man be no manner ov manes, an' he'd have to eject me in the long run, an' so I'd make nothing at all by holdin' on. Isn't it betther for me to sell it, an' get something for my intherest in it, an' clear my good father's name, than have the sheriff come down on me, an' lave me nothing at all?"

"What signifies two years' rint?" said Mrs. Clancy. "Sure 'tis nothing but a dhrop in the ocean to Mr. Dillon, an' the like ov him. He ought to remimber that you are the last ov a good ould stock, that lived on his ground for hundreds of years, an' that it was your mother that nursed his own daughter into the bargain. He'll forgive you every pinny if you only go the right way to work wid him, an' thin you can begin a new score wid him as fresh as a daisy. He never could stand the country if he threw you out on the wide world, an' you all that's left afther your dacent father."

"An' is it because I *am* the last afther my dacent father, that I'm to bring discredit on his name?"

this exploit of yours. Faith, his blackthorn stick and your broad shoulders will be made better acquainted than they ever were before."

"Oh, be the mortial, here he is!" exclaimed Pat, in very genuine alarm. "I'm off; an', Mr. Macnamara dear, you needn't purtind that I was here at all." And, diving down under the arms of those around him with the dexterity of Harlequin in the pantomime, he made his exit from the booth just as the priest was coming in with half-a-score of freeholders, who were prevailed on by alternate threats and coaxing to accompany him to record their votes for the popular candidate.

Meanwhile the scene, or rather the variety of scenes that took place outside in the streets, almost baffle my poor powers of description. The crowd there was immense, but there was no anger or turbulence among the people. There was a good deal of pushing and crushing, combined with a noise and confusion of tongues that might well have put Babel to shame, yet there was also much good humour, and a spirit of rollicking fun that is not to be found anywhere on earth save among an Irish crowd. Pleasant jokes and witty chaff were bandied about freely, and peals of laughter that were as contagious as they were light-hearted, went round

with scarcely any cessation. A large body of police was drawn up at one side of the Court House, but there seemed no probability that it would be required, while the chief officer lounged about, laughing and chatting with all his acquaintances as they passed up and down.

On the other side of the square, an old ballad-singer, whose clothes were absolutely in tatters, and whose ragged old bonnet was kept on her head by a piece of strong twine, was shouting at the highest pitch of her cracked voice, a doggrel song, the refrain of which gave much satisfaction:

Then success to brave O'Connell, wherever he is seen,
You'll know him when you see him, for he wears a shuit ov green.
For he gained ould Ireland's freedom, as I truly now declare,
When he won the great election, that was fought in County Clare.

Not far distant was another ballad-singer, who evidently was determined not to be outdone by a rival of the inferior sex, for with the lungs of a stentor, and a total disregard of time and tune, he was roaring out a panegyric on Father Mathew, who had

Bate the sarpint whiskey
Out ov green Airin's isle.

Both those minstrels were apparently doing a thriving trade, for with every verse they sang they

sold a dozen of ballads. Many a hand containing a halfpenny was held out for one of those admired compositions; and happy was he who succeeded in securing one to take home, for the amusement of the family circle. There was a blind fiddler mounted on the steps of a gentleman's hall-door, drawing sounds that could hardly be called music from the strings of a battered old fiddle; but whether it was owing to the bad state of the instrument, or to the want of skill in the musician, or to the deafening noise that reigned around, no one could tell what the tune was, or whether it was grave or gay. For that matter no one seemed to care one way or the other; but the poor blind man did not fare the worse, for so many coppers were dropped into his hat, that he might have been excused for thinking his discordant strains were the music of the spheres. Certainly there was no lack of music, for in another direction was a highland piper, looking very fierce and martial in kilt and philabeg, but whose accent, the moment he spake, proclaimed him to be unmistakably "a son of the sod." There was a Frenchman with a barrel organ, on the top of which was perched a monkey, whose hideous aspect and gaudy dress, joined to the demonstrative gestures and foreign speech of its owner, made

them the centre of a group of gaping rustics. This wretched animal became so terrified by the uproar and the pressure of the crowd, that it broke loose, and scampered off over the heads of the people, who screamed with terror or roared with laughter, until it finally took refuge on the outer sill of a first-floor window, from which coign of vantage it looked down posturing and jabbering after the uncouth fashion of all its race. It would be hard to tell whether the antics of the ape, or the frantic gesticulations and broken English of the poor Frenchman, were the most absurdly ludicrous.

As a matter of course, the human voice was not wanting to increase the general clamour and confusion. It was there in every key and variety of accent; from all classes and all ages; from the shrill treble of the little street Arab, who trotted about almost under the feet of the people, to the deep bass of the stalwart giant; from the mellifluous brogue of the countryman, to the more refined and subdued speech of his superior in the social scale.

"I hear that the tide has turned, and that now the chances are in favour of Dillon."

"I should not be surprised. The priests are working shoulder to shoulder for him, and we know what *they* can do when they are in earnest. At

every cost, they will have Dominic Dillon at the head of the poll."

"For God's sake, honest man, take your elbow out ov my ribs!"

"Yarra! don't be botherin' us. You think that no wan is kilt but yourself."

"I'll bet six to one, that, in spite of all the priests are doing, Egglestone rides the winning horse, and wins in a canter."

"Done! I'm as sure of your money as if I had it in my hand; so, old fellow, you had better have it handy. The Catholics will return Dillon, if their priests never interfered at all. Priests and people are working together now, as they have always done."

"Bosh! The landlords are more than a match for them. They have the freeholders, and the priests have the mob."

"Oh, you common basthoon! Don't you see how you're tearin' the shawl off my back?"

"Musha, bad luck to your impidence! What a rale *rookawn* you're risin' for nothing at all."

"Why, thin, peeler 'a graw machree, did you see that man ov mine anywhere at all?"

"How can I tell? Sure I don't know your husband from Adam."

"Oh, tare an' 'ouns! What a rale omadhawn I am to stand here all day, to be shoved and scrouged, as if I was only a lump ov dough; an' my supper ov beautiful new praties by the fire at home waitin' for me."

"That I may never die in sin, if I had so much fun in all my life before. I wouldn't miss this day for the best pound note I ever shut my fist on."

All this time the friends and agents of Mr. Dillon had exerted themselves to such good purpose, that the fortune of the day had undergone a change, and that gentleman had not only come up with his opponent in the several booths, but had shot ahead of him with so large a majority that before the day was half over his return was considered certain. Slips of paper giving the exact state of the poll were printed every half-hour, and circulated through the crowd, who received the accounts contained with great enthusiasm. At every fresh announcement the people flung up their hats, shouting and yelling as if they had gone mad.

At three o'clock Mr. Egglestone, seeing that his case had become desperate, withdrew from the contest. He saw that his own supporters had been polled to the last man, while from all parts of the

country great numbers still were pouring in to record their votes for the owner of Castle Cloyne.

No sooner was it known that Mr. Egglestone had, as the phrase went, "thrown up the sponge," than the excitement and exultation of the people became perfectly indescribable. They cheered as the Irish know how to cheer—not with the voice alone, but with the heart, that broke out through it and thrilled through every inflection. Round after round of triumph pealed out and died away, and then burst forth again and yet again, with renewed and most emphatic joy. Then there was no end of hand-shaking. The people were shaking hands with their priests, with each other, and with everyone who would shake hands with them. As for Hyacinth Dillon, it was well that his hand was suffered to remain attached to his body, and not wrung off altogether, in the uproarious congratulations of his friends and supporters.

This state of things was of course gall and wormwood to the opposite party. They could have borne their defeat with more equanimity, had the rejoicing over it been a little less pronounced, but the "Io triumphe" had been so loud and universal that it actually maddened them. A growl of dissent arose, low at first, but gradually increasing in force and

volume, with an ominous sound that argued ill for the continuation of the good humour that had hitherto prevailed among the crowd.

"Down wid the rebel Dillons! Down wid the ould Papist nest of Castle Cloyne!" shouted a diminutive hunchback, who was bailiff to the gentleman that had proposed Mr. Egglestone.

"Erra, what's that you're sayin,' you misfortunate example? If you spake another word, by St. Pathrick, I'll make such smithereens ov that crooked carcase of yours, that your own mother wouldn't know you!" cried a burly butcher, looking down on the little man with eyes sparkling with rage.

"Oh *baithershin!* Fake an' sure, you won't do anything ov the sort, while the peelers are to the fore. There's law in the land, my fine fella, for you an' the likes ov you, an' a quiet little corner in the stone jug, where you'll get plinty ov time to get cool. Arrah! be aisy, man; or you'll be made to do it."

The big butcher made no reply, but clasping his strong arms round the unfortunate hunchback, he raised him from the ground bodily, and flung him with great force over the heads of the people. He struggled and wriggled for a moment, and then fell heavily down through an opening made for him by

the sheer weight of his own body. He rose to his feet immediately, with blood streaming down his face in a copious stream; but as it was proceeding from his nose, his injury was more apparent than real.

"Boys, will ye stand by, an' see me kilt an' murthered be that infernal ruffin?" he yelled, as he dashed the gouts of blood aside with both hands.

"Av you'd keep a civil tongue in your head, no wan would lay hand on you," observed a by-stander. "It will tache you to let the Papists alone for the futhur. 'Tis a poor case, that we have to stand here to listen to a *critchahawn** ov your sort ballyraggin' us."

"To hell with the Pope, an' the priests along wid him!" bawled a man, who was the very next moment felled to the ground by the brawny arm of the butcher.

The *mêlée* now became general. However, the space was so confined and crowded with people, that though blows were freely exchanged and sticks flourished in the air, not much harm was done, but the confusion and noise were dreadful. Some of the gentlemen present called loudly for the police, and for a magistrate to read the Riot Act, just as a fresh

* *Critchahawn*—A hunchback.

actor appeared upon the scene. This was Father O'Rafferty, brought to the spot by the uproar, and he at once proceeded to quell the tumult in a fashion peculiar to himself. He rushed into the very thickest of the battle, and laid on right and left, on friend and foe, with his stout blackthorn cudgel, with such praiseworthy impartiality and downright goodwill, that he scattered the combatants as if they had been so many frightened sheep.

"Take that, and that, and that!" he shouted, following every word with a whack laid on with all the strength of his arm. "I'm shamed an' disgraced by ye! 'Tis a pity not to leave ye to murder one another, or be shot down by the police like mad dogs; and that I don't do it is not for your sake, but for the sake of your wretched wives and children. What, ye ruffianly blackguards! 'Tis fighting ye want—no less! Well, here I am, and I'll give ye enough of it, see if I don't. Take that, and that!" and again the stick came down with the force of a sledge-hammer.

This shower of blows, well aimed and given in earnest, had such good effect, that in a few moments the crowd that had been so dense dissolved very rapidly. They who were nearest the priest, and under the immediate influence of his terrible stick,

received their castigation with wry faces and cries of pain, while they who were at a distance beheld the performance with shouts of laughter. What had promised to be a tragedy ended by being a screaming farce!

"You have not done badly this time as a champion of the Church militant, Father John," said Terry Macnamara, who had watched the scene with much amusement; "but though you are great, be merciful also. The arms and backs of some of those poor devils will be black and blue for a month to come, after the thrashing you gave them."

"The rascals haven't had enough yet," replied the priest, who, however, lowered the formidable blackthorn. "Their bad conduct has brought me to shame; and I was so proud of them, forsooth, and boasted so much of their good behaviour! To tell the truth, they *were* well-behaved, and would have continued so to the end, only for that miserable little humpback, who began the fray. But I think he was drunk."

"And I am sure of it. I saw him to-day in half-a-dozen public-houses, treating himself, as well as others, at Mr. Egglestone's expense, and this row has been the consequence. It was well you were so near, otherwise there would have been bad work, and the police should interfere."

"Well, bad as I was to them, it was better for them to have to deal with my blackthorn, than with the bayonets of the police."

A fresh incident now occurred that diverted the public attention into another channel. For some days a travelling circus had been advertised to perform in the neighbourhood on the day of the election, and now the horses and performers were advancing up the street in grand parade. The procession was headed by a high open car, painted in gaudy colours and drawn by four piebald horses. A brass band, braying with might and main, occupied this car, adding a good deal to the noise, though the less that is said of the *music* the better. After this showy vehicle came another, containing the "funny men" of the company, wearing hideous masks, and dressed most grotesquely. The cavalcade was closed by the females of the troupe on horseback. On account of the crowd, they had to proceed very slowly, to the great delight of the people, who were delighted to get gratis a good deal of the sight that should be paid for by-and-by. All went on well until the first car, containing the band, arrived at a part of the square that opened into a back street, or rather lane. From this lane a flock of geese, led by a solemn-looking old gander, issued at the moment the car arrived, and, with the stupidity of the race,

marched straight on instead of turning back on to either side. Unable either to stop or recede, the driver of the car, with a lofty air of contemptuous indifference, drove right down on the geese. Though geese saved the Capitol and city of Rome, they could not save themselves in this instance, but, fluttering their wings, raised such an outcry as even to drown the discordant sounds of the band. The scene was so full of all the elements of broad farce, so absurd, so noisy, as to defy all description. When at last, amidst the inextinguishable laughter of the crowd, the cavalcade had swept on, it was seen that more than half of the unfortunate birds were dead, and the rest so maimed that they were quite worthless. The poor old woman who was their owner came out of the lane just in time to behold the catastrophe, and her lamentations over their destruction were loud and long-continued. She had good reason to remember "Dillon's election," for those wretched geese made all her worldly wealth. The Irish geese, less wise and fortunate than their Roman predecessors, instead of being honoured as the saviours of a great nation, were the sport of a mob, and were crushed to death under the wheels of a travelling caravan.

END OF VOL. I.

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